A

SYSTEM

OF

Divinity and *Morality*;

IN A

SERIES of DISCOURSES

On all the eſſential Parts of

Natural and revealed Religion:

Compiled from the Works of the following eminent Divines of the Church of England, viz.

ATTERBURY,	DORRINGTON,	MOORE,
BALGUY,	GIBSON,	MOSS,
BARROW,	GOODMAN,	PEARSON,
BENTLEY,	HICKMAN,	ROGERS,
BEVERIDGE,	HOLE,	SHARP,
BLACKHALL,	HOPKINS,	SYNGE,
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BENJ. CALAMY,	IBBOT,	TILLOTSON,
CLAGETT,	LITTLETON,	WAKE,
CLARKE,	LUPTON,	And others.

To which are aded,

Some OCCASIONAL DISCOURSES.

The Whole REVISED and CORRECTED

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Rector of Queenhithe, London.

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Diſcourſe CIII. Dr. *Clarke.*

The DIFFERENCE between GOOD and EVIL, VIRTUE and VICE.

Iſai. v. 20.

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter.

THE reaſonableneſs of religion is the greateſt condemnation of ſin and wickedneſs, as being contrary to the nature of man, the reaſon of things, and the poſitive command of God. The diſtinction of moral actions is as neceſſary and manifeſt as the difference of natural ſenſible objects. Light and darkneſs, ſweetneſs and bitter, are ſo evidently contrary to each other, that no men can miſtake them, who have the uſe of their ſenſes. Pain and pleaſure are ſo directly oppoſite, that nothing but loſs of life can make us inſenſible of them. Moral good and evil, virtue and vice, are as widely different in their own nature, as the perceptions of our outward ſenſes. And God has endued us with faculties of the ſoul to diſtinguiſh the one, as well as bodily ſenſe to diſcern the other. Whoever then will obſtinately deny all diſtinction between good and evil, virtue and vice, muſt as much lay aſide the uſe of his natural reaſon and underſtanding; as he that would confound light and darkneſs, muſt deny the evidence of his ſenſes. And if ſuch a perſon receives the juſt puniſhment of ſin, he de-

ſerves no more pity, than one that falls from a precipice, becauſe he would not open his eyes to ſee his danger. Miſery and deſtruction muſt neceſſarily enſue from our neglecting thoſe rules, on which God and nature have made the happineſs of the ſoul to depend; this, as certain as the deſtruction of the body, muſt be the conſequence of not diſtinguiſhing between things wholſome and poiſonous.

By how much clearer the difference is between good and evil; by how much the more obſtinately wilful ſinners ſhut their eyes againſt the light of reaſon and conſcience, the excellency and neceſſity of virtue, which is the only plain way to true happineſs; by ſo much the leſs pitiable is their deſtruction.

That there is originally in the nature of things, a neceſſary and eternal difference between good and evil, virtue and vice, which reaſon conſtantly obliges men to regard, is ſuppoſed in the text; by the prophets comparing the difference of good and evil, to that which is ſo very obvious and ſenſible, as light and darkneſs: A difference ſo plain and ſelf-evident, that nothing can be more manifeſt. For as he who would abſurdly contend that there was no difference between light and darkneſs, could not be confuted by any ſtronger argument, than the evidence of his own ſenſes; ſo any one who perverſely denies all difference between good and evil, can have no better argument offered, to convince him of this great and fundamental truth, than by appealing to his own reaſon and conſcience. When men will deny a truth as evident as that between light and darkneſs, puniſhment is the proper remedy for ſuch obſtinacy. Natural good and evil, in ſuch inſtances, as are perſonal to us, and where the effect is not remote, we are always ſenſible of, and can eaſily diſtinguiſh. Death and life, ſickneſs and health, pleaſure and pain, poverty and riches, honour and diſgrace, are differences which none diſ-

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pute, nor will any one be careleſs therein; but men always purſue the one, and endeavour to avoid the other; yet in theſe things is originally founded the difference of moral good and evil, which are ſo much neglected. That which truly tends to the perfection of human nature, and the general happineſs of mankind, is moral good, as well as natural. Moral evil is what corrupts, depraves and diſhonours our nature, and renders it really miſerable; this diſquiets mens minds, weakens their bodies; ruins their eſtates, and deſtroys their reputation; this breaks laws, diſturbs good government, diſorders and confounds the world. Theſe reſpective effects, tho' ſometimes at a diſtance, are yet moſt certain, and of natural conſequence; ſo that even in nature, virtue and vice, wiſdom and folly, are as diſtinct and unalterable, as happineſs and miſery.

God hath ſo conſtituted our nature, that the things which univerſally promote our happineſs, are the chief inſtances of our duty; the performance of which is the moſt direct means to attain everlaſting happineſs. The final event of things will always be ſuch as is now deſcribed, and the order of nature tends to make it ſo. The fear and love of God, the obeying his commands, the ſenſe of his preſent and future favour, is the only ſure foundation of that ſolid peace and ſatisfaction of mind, in which a rational immortal ſpirit can poſſibly acquieſce. Piety towards God is therefore as neceſſarily good in itſelf, and is in nature and reaſon of as an unchangeable obligation, as the creator is infinitely ſuperior to his creatures: Temperance and ſobriety, diligence and patience, the due government of our appetites, and reſtraint of our paſſions, are the only natural and moſt certain means of preſerving the health of our bodies, of improving the faculties of our minds, and of qualifying us for the regular performance of all duties of life. Such government of

ourſelves, is as neceſſarily good and obliging in the nature of the thing, as it is uſeful and excellent in its effects. Juſtice and righteouſneſs, goodneſs and charity, faithfulneſs and truth, ſubjection and obedience to government and laws, are the only poſſible means of preſerving the public peace, the order, mutual protection and ſupport of ſociety; on which depends all our happineſs, and whatever is moſt valuable. Theſe are as unchangeably wiſe and good, and by the eternal reaſon of things, are of as indiſpenſible obligation; as it is natural and neceſſary for us to deſire our own happineſs and the public welfare. Wicked and unreaſonable men will be governed by no rule, but their preſent appetites. Whatever gratifies their luſt or paſſion, that they chuſe as their good and happineſs; not conſidering that it may prove to themſelves or others the greateſt evil, deſtructive of public peace, order and government. For want of this conſideration, they confound the natural and eternal difference of things, judging of good and evil by their own ſenſual luſts and paſſions. But as the difference of light and darkneſs cannot be changed by the will and pleaſure of men; ſo good and evil are prior and ſuperior to all human laws, and which they cannot alter.

Human laws are to enforce and ſecure the practice of what was before in their own nature good and uſeful to ſociety. It is not therefore barely the force and obligation of a law, that makes a thing good and fit to be practiſed; but the wiſdom and goodneſs of the things themſelves is the ground and foundation of all wiſe laws. So that men are compelled by laws to do, what would otherwiſe have been reaſonable and good for them to have done. We are obliged by nature and reaſon, to adore and worſhip God, to pray and give thanks to him, as the ſupreme author and preſerver of our being; and to do what good we can to all men,

moting the happineſs of our fellow creatures, the peace and good order of the world. It is neceſſary the fear and authority of laws ſhould prevent thoſe from hindering this great end, who would not otherwiſe be reſtrained by reaſon or the fear of God. But the obligation of right reaſon would ſtill have been the ſame, had no human laws been made. Nay, ſhould any human authority require us to deſtroy and do all manner of evil to each other, and eſteem it truer greatneſs to ruin than to protect mankind, and preſerve the common rights of ſocieties; yet it would be neither wiſe, nor good, nor reaſonable or honourable ſo to do; any more than for men agreeing to call poiſon wholſome, would make it ſo, or for darkneſs to put on the nature of light. Wicked and unreaſonable men know they do evil; and are ſenſible that the practice of virtue and goodneſs is infinitely more reaſonable than debauchery and injuſtice. Tho' their luſts and paſſions have ſuch dominion over them, that they will commit unjuſt and wicked actions; yet they know better things, and approve of them as more wiſe and reaſonable. The ſenſe of this they cannot get rid of; but it gives their minds great uneaſineſs. The reproach of conſcience imbitters all their ſinful enjoyments; and they ſecretly condemn themſelves, where no laws have power to do it. The crimes they commit are a continual ſlavery and burden upon their minds. The actions of virtuous and religious men they cannot but approve of. They will ſooner truſt a good man in any important buſineſs, than one that is vicious; and always deſire to have their affairs managed by men of uprightneſs and integrity. And will at laſt wiſh, however they have lived, that they could but die at leaſt, "the death of "the righteous, and that their laſt end may be like "his;" which clearly acknowledges the excellency

of virtue, and proves the neceſſary and eternal difference between good and evil, virtue and vice.

But God has moreover, by expreſs declaration of his will in holy ſcripture, and by his poſitive command, eſtabliſhed and confirmed this original difference of things, and by his power will ſupport and maintain it. The natural and unchangeable difference of good and evil, is ſuppoſed in the text, to be equally evident, with that of light and darkneſs. And that God will interpoſe his ſupreme power and authority to confirm and ſupport this difference of things, is contained in the poſitive declaration in the text; wherein a ſevere woe is denounced againſt all who ſhall attempt to confound them. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter." And that ſuch is the will of God, as well as the nature of things, may in great meaſure be collected from what we naturally know of him. As God is the ſole author and creator of all things, their natures muſt be ſuch as he was pleaſed to make them. The nature of things then is the law of God; ſo that what is agreeable or diſagreeable to right reaſon, muſt likewiſe be ſo to the will of God. And as good and evil appears to be as neceſſarily and eternally different in their nature, as light and darkneſs are to our ſenſe; it is manifeſtly the will of God, that the one ſhould be the rule of our moral actions, as the other is the guide of our natural ones. The light of the body is the eye; the meaning is, that our minds ought to be guided by reaſon and truth, as our bodies are by the ſight of the eye. In this reſpect, the light of nature ſufficiently condemns all the workers of unrighteouſneſs; the practice of iniquity being as truly a contempt of God's authority, as it is an abſurd confounding of the natural reaſons and proportions of things. The order

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and harmony of God's creation depends on every creature's acting according to the law of its nature; and this law obliges us to govern ourſelves by that underſtanding and knowledge, whereby we are enabled to diſcern between good and evil. God has endued us with faculties, both to enable us to diſtinguiſh what will promote the welfare and happineſs of the world; and that we might always direct our choice to ſuch actions as are moſt uſeful and beneficial to mankind. God himſelf in the government of the world always does what is beſt, and moſt tends to the good of the whole creation. And we are obliged ſo far as we are able, to imitate his nature, to conform ourſelves to ſuch an excellent example, by the ſtudy and practice of all goodneſs and holineſs, righteouſneſs and truth. This is the firſt ground and foundation of all religion; this is that knowledge of God and of his will, which nature implants, reaſon confirms, true wiſdom centers in, and all the happineſs of rational creatures depends upon.

But becauſe the vicious inclinations, unreaſonable paſſions, and perverſe diſputing of wicked men, have endeavoured to obſcure this cleareſt of all natural truths, concerning the neceſſary and eternal difference of good and evil; therefore God in all the ſupernatural revelations he has made of his will, and moſt expreſsly in that of the goſpel, has placed the ſum of all, in reſtoring virtue and goodneſs, which is the image of God; and rooting out vice, which is the kingdom of the devil; in aſcertaining the difference between good and evil, aſſigning to each their proper reward. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; and love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil." This eternal difference of good and evil, God has now confirmed with new authority, illuſtrated

with greater light, diſtinguiſhed with clearer bounds, and enforced the obſervance of, with new motives and ſtronger obligations. For this he ſent his ſon into the world, to live and to die for us; that he might effectually deſtroy the works of the devil, and the kingdom of darkneſs. For this he expreſsly revealed his wrath from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men; that the eternal difference of good and evil, that the voice of nature and reaſon, which men had neglected, might be ſupported by the authority of God himſelf. To this tend all the precepts of the goſpel, all our Saviour's ſermons, all his mercies, all his patience, and all his judgments. To this, all his promiſes gently invite and draw us, all his threatnings loudly command and preſs us. This is finally good and profitable to all men. On this depends all the bleſſings of this life; all the happineſs of a future eternity.

We may from hence obſerve, that religion and virtue are moſt agreeable to nature; that vice and wickedneſs are the moſt contrary to it. It is manifeſtly moſt ſuitable to uncorrupted nature, for men to live religiouſly, by chuſing what is good, and avoiding what is evil. Indeed, ſome men, blinded by wicked cuſtoms and habits, by pleaſure and intereſt, by falſe opinions and looſe practices, frequently err in this matter; and then to vindicate themſelves, they take refuge in infidelity, and preſumptuouſly call "light darkneſs, and darkneſs light;" and being hardned in ſin, mock at all differences between good and evil. But the nature of things ſtill remains the ſame. It is not nature, as they falſely call it, but unnatural and corrupt inclinations that lead them to wickedneſs. Both nature, reaſon and revelation require us to be religious; and virtue and goodneſs are as agreeable to the mind, as light to the eyes, or ſweetneſs to the taſte. Their own conſciences reproach them, whenever they act

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otherwiſe, and no power on earth can diſcharge them from this obligation. The ſum of Solomon's obſervation is, "that wiſdom excelleth folly, as far as "light excelleth darkneſs."

For hence we may alſo learn, that the knowledge of the fundamental and moſt important doctrines of religion, may eaſily be attained, and that ignorance of our duty, is moſt inexcuſable; our minds being as naturally fixed to underſtand the neceſſary parts of our duty, as our eyes to judge of colours, or our palates of taſte. To know that we ought to fear and love, to worſhip and obey the great creator of all things, the author of our beings, the giver of whatever we enjoy or hope for; to underſtand that juſtice is better than iniquity, love and charity than violence and oppreſſion; doing good to mankind, and preſerving the world, than conquering, ravaging and deſtroying of nations; to find out that temperance and ſobriety, is more excellent than debauchery; and wiſe and reaſonable counſels, than the ſudden impulſes of luſts and paſſion; all theſe things require no great depth of knowledge, no nice diſputes, nothing that can perplex or confound the meaneſt underſtanding. Theſe are eaſy and obvious, plain and viſible, as the light of the day. Theſe things are of the greateſt importance and higheſt concern, for all men to know and underſtand. Again,

From hence it appears, that the judgments of God upon impenitent ſinners, are true, juſt and righteous. Had God commanded us only indifferent things, our obedience would have been highly reaſonable, and it would be juſt in God to puniſh thoſe who diſobeyed ſuch commands. But when God ſcarce impoſes any thing upon us, but what is abſolutely neceſſary, and which the conſcience of ſinners themſelves muſt approve as moſt reaſonable

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and excellent; as that wherein the happineſs of man conſiſts, as well as the law of God makes a duty; in ſuch a caſe, all the world muſt confeſs the righteouſneſs of God's judgments in their deſtruction, if they will not by his goodneſs be led to repentance. And it ſhould be obſerved, that whatever doctrine is contrary to God's nature and attributes, that is unwiſe or wicked, that tends to confound the eſſential and eternal difference of good and evil; every ſuch doctrine, however plauſibly ſupported, muſt be falſe. By this rule the Heathens might have diſcovered the folly of their idolatry. By the ſame rule men of underſtanding and probity will eaſily condemn moſt of thoſe corruptions in doctrine and worſhip, which have crept in among Chriſtians, under a falſe pretence of divine revelation. And it is alſo an excellent evidence of the truth of the goſpel, that beſides the authority of miracles and prophecies, it is in the nature of the thing itſelf, a conformity to the divine nature and attributes; a confirmation and improvement of our natural notions of good and evil, and of the rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate; alſo an aſſurance of God's being reconciled to ſinners thro' Chriſt, and a direct promoter of the univerſal happineſs of mankind. The remaining part of my diſcourſe ſhall be to give a brief deſcription of virtue and vice, that by comparing the amiableneſs of the one, with the odiouſneſs of the other, it may have a proper influence on our conduct.

" Virtue has ſuch charms as to win the hardeſt heart, to ſubdue the moſt ſavage diſpoſition; to excite veneration wherever it appears; to diſarm the rage of tyrants, and make malice itſelf relent. Theſe glorious effects are entirely owing to that intrinſic lovelineſs, that divine excellence, which is peculiar to it. If we conſider how uſeful and beneficial it is to the public! how it promotes the ends

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of ſociety, and conduces to its peace and proſperity! no wonder that virtue ſhould be eſteemed and honoured, in all countries and ages; in regard it yields the moſt valuable fruits, provides for all ſtates, conditions, and relations of life. Not one laudible practice, not one meritorious action can be done, which does not ſpring from virtue and religion. Hence flow all thoſe deeds and diſtinctions, which form the nobleſt characters, and make ſo delightful a figure in hiſtory. Hence men are enabled to acquit themſelves worthily, to fill and adorn every ſtation, that derives benefit and honour to their country. How juſt a claim then has virtue to be eſteemed and reverenced by all men! even its enemies, againſt their wills, have a ſecret veneration for it. If they outwardly revile it, they are at the ſame time conſcious of its worth and excellence; and will frequently praiſe virtue, while they are practiſing vice, being in ſome degree compelled to do it juſtice. The honeſt and the upright are reverenced by knaves, the kind and charitable by hard-hearted miſers, the meek and merciful by tyrants and oppreſſors. But perhaps ſome will aſk, if virtue be thus honoured; why has it been ſo often diſcountenanced and diſcouraged, perſecuted and oppreſſed? why permitted to ſuffer ſuch hardſhips and difficulties? To which I reply, that this is not inconſiſtent with what has been advanced; for virtue is always more glorious for ſuffering. When it ſtands in the way of evil men, no wonder if it be oppoſed. The frowns of oppreſſion, the ſtorms of perſecution, it naturally expects from that quarter, without any diminution of its credit; for theſe do but render it more venerable and illuſtrious.

But on the other hand, vice is ſure to be diſapproved and condemned; amidſt all the corruptions of mankind, it cannot gain credit and eſteem; but expoſes men to infamy and contempt. It is in its own

nature

nature ſo deformed, odious, and miſchievous; ſo fatal to individuals, ſo pernicious to public communities; that even its votaries dare not be advocates for it. Of all the evils which infeſt ſociety, of all the croſſes and calamities that imbitter human life, much the greateſt part is occaſioned by vice and wickedneſs. It ſets man againſt man, and man againſt himſelf; it darkens his underſtanding, preverts his judgment, weakens his hand, and corrupts his heart. It makes men inordinate, diſobedient, licentious, diſſolute; contemners of all ſocial obligations, violaters of all order, harmony and peace. It renders them unfit to be employed or truſted in the public ſervice. A vicious man is dreaded by ſome, deteſted by others, and diſliked by all. Theſe are the fruits and natural tendency of vice. What pretenſions then can it poſſibly have to honour and eſteem? Vicious perſons can never be valued or regarded; their real portion is ſhame and contempt, both within and without; their character agrees with the teſtimony of conſcience, and the ſentiments of the public are conformable to their own. And,

Let us next conſider that a virtuous man is entitled to the favour and approbation of God, who is the great lover of righteouſneſs, the patron of all virtue. His approbation of virtue, and abhorrence of vice, are clear and certain, both from reaſon and revelation. An all-perfect being muſt neceſſarily approve in the higheſt degree what is moſt amiable and excellent; and he muſt equally deteſt what is moſt odious and abominable. Can a Being infinitely good, not delight in goodneſs? or, he who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, ſhew it any favour? For the truth of this, we may appeal to all his laws and ſanctions. The ſum and ſubſtance of the former, is to oblige men to avoid evil, and to do good, to purify their minds and manners, and improve them in virtue. And the latter tends to lead

lead men to their duty, to their happineſs, and perfection, by working on their hopes and fears, and drawing them by the ſtrongeſt and moſt powerful motives. Nothing therefore is plainer than that virtue is moſt acceptable, and vice moſt odious in the ſight of God. We may farther conſider the inestimable value of God's approbation; which is the higheſt pitch, the utmoſt perfection of glory. And what an honour muſt it be to the children of men, to have their conduct approved by an all-perfect, unerring judge, who is omniſcient and impartial; who ſearches the hearts, and penetrates the inmoſt receſſes of our ſouls? Not a motive can offer, not a purpoſe be formed, not a thought ſtir, unperceived by him; but the whole proceſs of the mind is naked and open in his ſight. So that from his approbation they derive the fulleſt and firmeſt ſanction, the infallible ſtamp of truth. And what can be conceived more glorious than ſuch a divine atteſtation? Can the ambition of men or angels riſe higher than to be approved and applauded by the great judge of heaven and earth? Compared to this, how inconſiderable is the praiſe of all mankind; even the united applauſes of the whole creation. Let a man be ſuppoſed at the great day, to receive the approbation of the whole world; to hear his praiſe reſounded by the whole hoſt of heaven; ſo vaſt an honour would fall infinitely ſhort of that divine encomium, that ſingle ſentence, of "well done, "good and faithful ſervant; enter thou into the joy "of thy Lord." It may be needleſs to add, that the demerit and infamy of ſin and wickedneſs, will then be rendered moſt conſpicuous. It is not poſſible to expreſs the horror, ſhame and confuſion, that will then cover the wicked, when the evidence againſt them is ſummed up by the univerſal judge. Not an eye will dare to look up to him, whom they diſhonoured in this life; whoſe authority they inſulted,

ſulted, whoſe laws they deſpiſed. The conſciouſneſs of their preſumption, and impiety, will overwhelm their ſouls with ſhame, dread, and remorſe unſpeakable; and this will be their portion and promotion for ever.

So that to deſpiſe the good opinion of mankind is vain affectation; to ſlight the teſtimonies of our conſciences is extreme folly; but to neglect and diſregard the approbation of heaven is deſperate madneſs. The deſire of true glory, is one of the moſt generous inclinations that belong to the minds of men. But how miſerably do we delude ourſelves, when we ſeek for it in the paths of ſin? It is virtue only that can anſwer ſuch a demand, that can procure true honour and immortal fame. As it always ſhines with its own rays, and ſheds a luſtre over this preſent life; ſo an inheritance of glory, of the pureſt and nobleſt kind, awaits it in the next. What inexpreſſible honours will there crown the heads of the righteous! What mutual joy and exultation! What congratulations from ſaints and angels, with the world's redeemer at their head! what praiſe from God himſelf! what honours in his preſence! what glories at his right hand! his faithful ſervants will be ever moſt precious in his ſight; and he will make "them ſhine as the brightneſs of the firma-" ment, and as the ſtars for ever and ever."

Diſcourſe CIV. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Sin not chargeable on God.

James i. 13.

Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

NEXT to the belief of a God, and his providence, there is nothing more fundamentally neceſſary to the practice of a good life, than the belief of theſe two principles, "that God is "not the author of ſin; and that every man hath "reaſon to blame himſelf for all the ſin and evil he "doth." Was God the author of ſin, or acceſſary to our faults, ſin in us would be either a meer paſſive obedience to God's will, or an active compliance with it. And ſuch actions could not be juſtly puniſhed; for all puniſhment ſuppoſes a fault, which implies liberty and freedom from force and neceſſity; but no man can be juſtly puniſhed for what he cannot help, and he cannot avoid what he is neceſſitated and compelled to commit. And was there only temptation, and no force uſed, yet it would be unreaſonable for the ſame perſon to tempt and puniſh. It is then as contrary to the holineſs of God, to tempt men to ſin, as it is contrary to his juſtice and goodneſs firſt to entice men to do evil, and then chaſtiſe them for it. This principle therefore, that God is not the author of men's ſins, is the foundation of all religion. And alſo that every man's fault lies at his own door, and he has reaſon

to

to blame himſelf, for all the evil he does; which will appear from hence, that whoever does amiſs is conſcious it was his own act, and that he might have done otherwiſe; and this is what properly makes men guilty. Guilt renders men liable to puniſhment, the fear of which is the great reſtraint from ſin, and a principal argument for virtue and obedience. Theſe two principles are fully aſſerted by the apoſtle, "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed."

To tempt a man in general, ſignifies to try him. In ſcripture, temptation is uſually confined to the trial of a man's good or bad, virtuous or vicious inclinations. Men are thus tempted, either by others or themſelves. By others, through perſuaſions to ſin; or by being brought into ſuch circumſtances, as greatly endanger their falling, tho' none ſolicit them to it. As to the former, the devil thus tempted our firſt parents. He firſt repreſents the advantages they ſhould have by breaking God's commands; "in the day ye eat of the "fruit, your eyes ſhall be opened, and ye ſhall be "as Gods, knowing good and evil:" and then would have them ſuppoſe, the danger of offending to be leſs, than they imagined; "the ſerpent ſaid "unto the woman, ye ſhall not ſurely die." Aad thus bad men tempt and endeavour to draw others into the ſame wicked courſes with themſelves. But God tempts no man this way. He perſuades none to ſin, offers no reward or impunity to ſinners; but on the contrary gives all poſſible encouragement to our obedience, and threatens the moſt dreadful puniſhments to thoſe who tranſgreſs his laws.

Men

Men are alſo tempted, by being brought into ſuch circumſtances, as will greatly endanger their falling into ſin, though none perſuade them to it. This happens, when men are ſtrongly beſet with the allurements or aſſaulted with the evils and calamities of this world; either of which conditions are great temptations to, and powerful aſſaults on men. Riches, honours, and pleaſures, being the occaſions and incentives to many luſts, are ſtrong temptations. Honour, greatneſs, power, and authority, eſpecially when men are ſuddenly raiſed from a low condition, are apt to tranſport men to pride and inſolence. Power eaſily intoxicates weak minds, makes men ſay and do indecent things. It requires great conſideration, not to be lifted up with a high ſtate. Eaſe and proſperity without great care will endanger men's falling into ſin. For this reaſon Agur prayed, that God would give him neither poverty nor riches, but keep him from the danger of both extremes. An eager deſire to poſſeſs and enjoy riches, often proves fatal to men. The apoſtle fully deſcribes the great danger of this condition. They (ſays he) "that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men into deſtruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil." But the greateſt bait to fleſh and blood, is ſenſual pleaſures; the preſence and opportunity of theſe, are apt to kindle the deſires, and inflame the luſts of men.

The evils and calamities of this world, eſpecially if extreme, are alſo ſtrong temptations to human nature. Poverty and want, pain and ſuffering, the fear of any great evil, in particular that of death, are ſevere trials, and very apt to tempt men to great ſins; ſuch as impatience and diſcontent, unjuſt and diſhoneſt ſhifts, the forſaking of God, and apoſtacy from his truth and religion. Agur was

ſenſible of the dangerous temptation of poverty, and therefore prays againſt that, as well as againſt riches; ſays he "give me not riches, leſt I be full and deny "thee; nor yet poverty, leſt being poor, I ſteal, and "take the name of the Lord my God in vain." Thus the devil tempted Job, when he deſired God firſt to touch his eſtate, and after to afflict him with great bodily pains. And in this way the primitive Chriſtians were tempted to forſake Chriſt and his religion, by a moſt violent perſecution, by the ſpoiling of their goods, impriſonment, torture and death. But, ſaith the apoſtle, "bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tired he ſhall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him." Thus much for the ſignification of the word temptation.

I will now conſider how far God hath any hand in ſuch kind of temptations. That the providence of God orders or permits men to be brought into the circumſtances ſpoken of, which are dangerous temptations to men, no one can doubt, that believes his providence is concerned in the affairs of the world. But the difficulty is, what ſhare God has in theſe temptations; for the clearer underſtanding this, it muſt be obſerved, that the ends and reaſons of all temptations are, either for the trial and improvement of men's virtue; or as a judgment and puniſhment for ſome paſt great ſins and provocations; or directly to ſeduce men to ſin. The end which God aims at, in permitting good men to fall into temptation, is the exerciſe and improvement of their graces and virtues. "Bleſſed is the "man that endureth temptation; for when he is "tried, he ſhall receive the crown of life, which "the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him." When God permits men to be tempted only to make them better, and prepare them for a greater reward; this is no reflection on his providence: ſince

ſince the "ſufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed in us. For we know that all things ſhall work together for good, to them that love God." The providence of God ſecures this happy end of temptations to good men, either by proportioning the temptation to their ſtrength; or by affording them new ſtrength and ſupport, by the extraordinary aids of his holy ſpirit. He will ſo order things by his ſecret wiſe providence, that they ſhall not be aſſaulted by any temptation, exceeding their ſtrength to reſiſt and overcome. Did not God take this care of us, even thoſe who have the firmeſt and moſt reſolute virtue, would be in infinite danger. A temptation may attack the beſt men with ſo much violence, or ſurprize, as no common degree of grace and virtue can withſtand. But where men are ſincerely and honeſtly reſolved, God's providence will ſecretly preſerve them from being aſſaulted, by ſuch irreſiſtible temptations. As this conſideration ſhould encourage us to be ſincerely good, ſo it is a ſtrong argument for us continually to depend on God, and not confide in our own ſtrength. "Let him that thinketh he "ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall; there hath no "temptation taken you, but ſuch as is common to "men." Nothing but what human ſtrength, aſſiſted by the ordinary grace of God, may reſiſt and conquer. But when we are tried with greater and more violent temptations, we muſt have recourſe to God for an extraordinary aſſiſtance. In ſuch caſe, he will afford us ſtrength and ſupport equal to the force and power of the temptation. "God is faithful, who will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it." This God did in ſuch a wonderful manner to the Chriſtian martyrs, as made them joyfully embrace their ſufferings, and with the

greateſt chearfulneſs endure thoſe torments, which no human patience was able to bear. And where God thus ſecures men againſt, or ſupports them under temptations, it is no reflection on his goodneſs or juſtice, to permit their being thus tempted. Again,

God may permit temptation, by way of judgment and puniſhment, for ſome former great ſins which men have committed. Thus God is ſaid to have hardened Pharoah by thoſe plagues and judgments, which he ſent on him and his kingdom. Though, if we carefully read, we find, that Pharoah firſt hardened himſelf, and then that God hardened him; not that God infuſed wickedneſs or obſtinacy into him, but the juſt judgments which God ſent, had that unnatural effect, as to harden him yet more. And thus we muſt underſtand other ſuch like expreſſions. As "make the heart of this people fat, their ears heavy, and ſhut their eyes, leſt they ſee with their eyes, hear with their ears, underſtand with their hearts, and be converted;" which ſignifies no more, than that God for the former provocations and impenitency of that people, left them to their own hardneſs and blindneſs, ſo that they did not deſire to uſe means for their recovery. And the apoſtle threatens thoſe that rejected the truth, "that for this cauſe God would ſend them ſtrong deluſions, that they ſhould believe a lye, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs;" that is, God, as a juſt puniſhment for their renouncing the truth, gave them over to the power of deluſion. Thus God is ſaid to give men up to the power of temptation, as a puniſhment of ſome former great crimes and offences; nor is it unjuſt with God, to leave men to the power of temptation, when they firſt wilfully forſake him. For in ſuch caſe, God doth not

not tempt men to ſin, but leaves them to be tempted by their own heart's luſt; becauſe they neglected God's grace, by which they might have reſiſted thoſe temptations; and forced his holy ſpirit to withdraw, and leave them naked and defenceleſs.

The laſt end of temptations I mentioned, is, when they are uſed with a direct intention to ſeduce men to ſin. Thus wicked men tempt others, and the devil tempts us. Thus he tempted our firſt parents, and ſeduced them from their obedience and allegiance to God. Thus he tempted Job, and our bleſſed Saviour; and thus he daily tempts men, "going about continually ſeeking whom he may" ſeduce and deſtroy. And as far as God permits his power to reach, he ſuits his temptations to the humours, appetites, and inclinations of men; propoſing ſuch objects, as are moſt likely to excite irregular deſires, inflame their luſts, and tempt their evil inclinations to what they are moſt ſtrongly bent. The covetous man he tempts with gain, the ambitious with preferment, the voluptuous with carnal and ſenſual pleaſures; and where none of theſe baits will take, he ſtirs up his inſtruments to perſecute thoſe who are ſtedfaſt in piety and virtue; to try if he can work on their fear, and ſhake their conſtancy and fidelity to God; and this on purpoſe to ſeduce men from their duty, and betray them to ſin. But in this ſenſe, "no man when he "is tempted, is tempted of God." He, indeed, often ſuffers men to fall into diverſe temptations, for the trial of their faith, the exerciſe of their obedience, and other virtues. He permits bad men to be aſſaulted with great temptations, and as a puniſhment of their obſtinacy and impiety, withdraws the aids and aſſiſtances of his grace, and leaves them to their own weakneſs and folly; however, not ſo as to take away all reſtraint of his grace

even from bad men, unleſs on very high provocation, and after a long and obſtinate continuance in ſin: But God never tempts any man with an intention to ſeduce him to commit ſin and wickedneſs; in this ſenſe it is far from God to tempt any one. Thus I have ſhewn how the expreſſion, that God tempts men, is to be limited and underſtood; from whence it appears, that to ſay God tempts men to ſin, is a falſe, and impious aſſertion, and what ought to be rejected with the greateſt indignation. For nothing can be more contrary to the holy and righteous nature of God, and to thoſe plain declarations he hath made of himſelf, than for him to ſeduce men to wickedneſs.

And this brings me to conſider the reaſon or argument, which the apoſtle uſes, againſt this impious ſuggeſtion; namely, "that God cannot be "tempted with evil." He being out of the power of any temptation: no one can be tempted, but by his own inclination, or the allurement of the object, or by ſome external motive and conſideration; but none of theſe can tempt God to evil. For the holy and pure nature of God, is at the greateſt diſtance from evil, and moſt contrary to it. He is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look "upon iniquity." Light and darkneſs are not more oppoſite to one another, than the holy nature of God is to ſin. "What fellowſhip hath light with "darkneſs, or God with Belial." Nor are there any external motives and conſiderations that can tempt God to ſin. All arguments that have any temptation, are founded on hope or fear; either the hope of gaining ſome benefit and advantage, or the fear of ſuffering ſome miſchief or inconvenience. But the divine nature being perfectly happy, and ſecure in its own happineſs, is free from all ſuch temptations. So that "God cannot be tempted "with evil;" and conſequently "he cannot tempt "any

"any man to it." For why ſhould he entice others to what he abhors, and is directly contrary to his own nature? When men tempt one another to ſin, they do it to make others like themſelves; and when the devil tempts men, it is either out of malice to God, or envy to men. But God can have no ſuch motives to tempt any man to ſin.

Bad men tempt others to ſin, either for the pleaſure of company, or thereby to countenance and excuſe themſelves; wicked men endeavour to make others like themſelves, that they may be fit company for each other. But God cannot for ſuch reaſons tempt men to ſin, becauſe that would make them unlike himſelf, and ſuch as he could take no pleaſure in. Again, though wicked perſons ſeduce others to ſin, thereby to countenance and excuſe their bad actions, which is the reaſon of that law, "thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil;" yet this cannot be applied to God, who not being evil himſelf, needs not to tempt others to be ſo, in excuſe and vindication of himſelf. And the devil tempts men to ſin, out of malice to God, to rob him of his ſubjects, to debauch the innocent and upright from their duty and allegiance, and to make him as many enemies as is poſſible. But for this end God cannot tempt any man, becauſe that would be to diſhonour himſelf, and deface his own work. The devil alſo tempts men, out of envy to them. When by his rebellion he forfeited happineſs, and became miſerable, it grieved him at his heart, to ſee the happy condition of man. This moved him to tempt man to ſin, thereby to involve him in the ſame miſery, into which he had plunged himſelf. But the divine nature is full of goodneſs, and delights in his creatures happineſs. His own perfect felicity puts him above any temptation of envy; or to tempt men to ſin, out of a deſire to ſee them miſerable.

The apoſtle alſo argues from the nature and perfection of God, that he cannot tempt any man to ſin; and thereby appeals to the common notions of mankind concerning God. All men readily agree, that "God hath all imaginable perfection:" but to be tempted to evil, would be a plain imperfection, and therefore "God cannot be ſo tempted," nor is it poſſible he ſhould tempt others to it. This method of the apoſtle, to argue from the "natural "notions which men have of God," teaches us one of the ſureſt ways of reaſoning in religion. For hence we learn, that all doctrines contrary to men's natural notions of God, are to be rejected. Whatever derogates from the goodneſs or juſtice of God, or any other of his perfections, is certainly falſe, however pretended to be countenanced from ſcripture; becauſe nothing can be entertained as a divine revelation, that plainly contradicts the common natural notions which mankind have of God. Should any revelation pretended to come from God, teach men, that God is not wiſe, good, juſt, and powerful; this would be reaſon enough to reject it, let the pretence of its being divine be ever ſo confident; nor ſhould any man be regarded, who pretends to prove from a divine revelation, doctrines contrary to the natural notions men have of God; ſuch as contradicts his holineſs, juſtice, or goodneſs, or makes God the author of ſin; becauſe, if ſuch revelation is from God, it can contain no ſuch thing. And whatever expreſſions in ſcripture are pretended to countenance ſuch opinions, muſt in their conſequences tend to weaken the authority of ſcripture itſelf, and afford the atheiſts ſo many arguments againſt the ſcripture. We ſhould therefore interpret all difficult expreſſions, by what is clear, plain, and agreeable to the main ſcope and tenor of the bible, and to thoſe natural notions which men have of God, and his perfections.

perfections. This is one of the ſureſt ways of reaſoning in religion, and whoever does ſo, can never much err; but he that regards not this rule, may run into the greateſt deluſions, eternally wander and loſe himſelf in one miſtake or other.

I now proceed to evince, that every man is his own greateſt tempter. For God does not tempt any man to ſin; but every man is then tempted, when by his own luſt, his irregular inclination and deſire, he is ſeduced to evil. "Every man is tempted, "when he is drawn aſide of his own luſt and en-"ticed." The luſt of men complying with the temptations which are offered, effectually gives them the victory over us. As the apoſtle here acquits God from tempting men to ſin, ſo he does not aſcribe the prevalency and efficacy of temptation, to the devil. It is true, he ſuppoſes, that baits are laid for men, "every man is tempted, when he is drawn aſide of "his own luſt, and enticed;" that is, when he plays with the baits that are laid for him, and ſwallows them. The ſcripture frequently tells us, that the devil is very active and buſy to tempt men; but yet their own luſts are the cauſe, why they are caught by him. Men indeed are very apt to charge the devil with all temptations, hoping thereby to excuſe themſelves; and without doubt, he is ever ſedulous to miniſter occaſions of temptations to ſin. For ſince his fall, out of enmity to God, envy and malice to mankind, he hath made it his great buſineſs and employment, to ſeduce men to ſin; by preſenting ſuch baits and allurements, as are moſt ſuitable and likely to prevail with their tempers and inclinations. Of this the ſcripture aſſures us in general, when it ſpeaks of Satan's devices, and the methods of his temptations. He employs his inſtruments to ſolicit and draw men to ſin by bad counſel and example; and often excites men to ſin, by infuſing and ſuggeſting evil motives into

into them; or diverting them from ſuch thoughts and conſiderations, as might reſtrain them from the wickedneſs to which he would tempt them. Thus the devil entered into Judas, to puſh him on to the execution of betraying our Saviour; and he is ſaid, to have filled the heart of Ananias, to lye to the Holy Ghoſt. Which expreſſions imply ſome more immediate power and influence of the devil over thoſe perſons; but then this power is never aſcribed to the devil, unleſs in the caſe of very enormous ſins, or where men were notoriouſly depraved, and had heinouſly provoked God. For Judas before the devil entered into him, had taken counſel againſt Chriſt; and the covetouſneſs of Ananias, had firſt tempted him to keep back part of his eſtate, before the devil filled his heart to lye againſt the Holy Ghoſt. So that what power the devil hath over men, they give it him; they conſent to his outward temptations, before he can get within them. When men are notoriouſly wicked, the devil is ſaid to inſpire them, which implies, that he hath over ſuch ſome more immediate power and influence.

But for all this, the devil can force no man to ſin; his temptations may move and incite us to ſin, but that they are prevalent and effectual, proceeds from our own will and conſent; it is our own luſts, cloſing with his temptations, that produces ſin. The devil hath never ſo much power as to force our wills to comply with his temptations. The grace of God hardly offers this violence to men, even to ſave them; much leſs will he give the devil ſuch power over men to ruin and deſtroy them. God's commanding us to reſiſt the devil, ſuppoſes his temptations are not irreſiſtible. So that the devil may be acceſſary to our ſins, yet we are the authors of them; he tempts us to ſin, but we commit it. Moſt of the wickedneſs in the world, ſprings from the evil motions

of

of men's own minds; their luſts are the worſt devil, and more ſtrongly incline them to ſin, than any devil can do; for he can hardly tempt men to any wickedneſs, to which he does not find them inclined. There is abundant more reaſon to attribute all good to the motions and operations of God's ſpirit, than to aſcribe all ſin and wickedneſs to the devil; becauſe God's ſpirit is more powerful to promote his deſign, than the devil can be to carry on his work: and yet there is great reaſon to think, that good men do many good actions of their own inclinations, without any immediate motion from the ſpirit of God. For tho' being regenerate and ſanctified by the Holy Ghoſt, they are afterwards continually under the conduct of the ſame ſpirit; yet where there is a new nature inclinable to good, that will of itſelf perform actions anſwerable thereto. And thus it appears, that as the apoſtle acquits God from tempting men to ſin, ſo neither does he aſcribe the efficacy and prevalency of temptation to the devil; but to the luſts and vicious inclinations of men, which ſeduce them to conſent and comply with the temptations that are offered; "every man is tempted, when he is "drawn aſide of his own luſts and enticed;" becauſe the luſts of men, are in a great meaſure voluntary; and God affords us power to reſiſt and overcome temptations.

The luſts of men, I mean their irregular deſires and vicious inclinations, are in a great meaſure voluntary. I admit that the nature of man is much corrupted and degenerated from its primitive integrity and perfection; but we Chriſtians have our natures ſo far healed, by the grace we receive in baptiſm, as if we are not wanting to ourſelves, and neglect not the means God hath appointed, we may mortify our luſts and lead a new life; if we do not this, we ourſelves are in fault. For

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though our luſts ſpring from ſomething which is natural, yet that they have dominion over us, is voluntary in us, becauſe we might remedy it, would we ſee the means that God in the goſpel offers; by which we may eaſily reſiſt the temptations to a great many ſins: ſome are ſo horrid, that we cannot but have a natural averſion to them, when under the ſtrongeſt temptations. The danger, the guilt, of deliberate murder is ſo great, as that a conſiderate man may eaſily reſiſt the ſtrongeſt temptation to it, even that of revenge. Injuſtice, fraud and oppreſſion are ſo baſe and diſgraceful, odious and abhorred by human nature, that it is not difficult for a man to overcome the greateſt temptation of gain and advantage. Profaneneſs and contempt of God and religion, are crimes ſo monſtrous, that whoever uſes his reaſon, can have no temptation to it, either from gratifying his humour, pleaſing his company, or ſhewing his wit, that can be of equal force with the arguments which every one's mind and conſcience would ſuggeſt againſt it. To common ſwearing there is no temptation, either from pleaſure or advantage, but only from cuſtom; and this temptation is eaſy to be conquered by a little care and reſolution. And as to leſſer ſins, reaſon and prudence with the grace of God, if we do not neglect it, will enable us to reſiſt all temptations to them. God offers to "give his holy ſpirit to them that aſk him," which is naturally in every one's power to aſk; for if none can aſk the ſpirit of God, till he firſt has it, then it is needleſs to aſk it, becauſe he has it already. And if God offers his grace to all men, then it is every man's fault if he has it not; and every man that hath it may, by the ordinary aſſiſtance of God's grace, reſiſt any temptation.

Let us then, from what has been ſaid, beware of all ſuch doctrines, as tend to make God the author

author of ſin, either by neceſſitating, tempting, or ſeducing men to commit it; ſince nothing can be farther from the nature of God, or more diſhonourable to him, than to imagine any ſuch thing of him; ſuch are the doctrines of an abſolute decree to damn the greateſt part of mankind, and in order thereto efficaciouſly to permit men to ſin. For if this is true, then thoſe who are included in this decree of God, are thereby under a neceſſity of ſinning; which, by conſequence, makes God the author of ſin. And then that other doctrine, ſubſervient to this; that God by a natural influence on the minds and wills of men, determines them to all actions they do, bad as well as good.

Let us alſo be careful not to tempt any man to ſin. This ſhould be well conſidered by thoſe who are buſy to ſeduce men to commit wickedneſs, to inſtruct them in the arts of iniquity, who take pleaſure in debauching a virtuous perſon, as if it was a glorious action to ruin and deſtroy the ſouls of men. God thus tempts no man, but this is the proper work and employment of the devil, his very trade and profeſſion; he goes about ſeeking whom he may betray into ſin and deſtruction. Tempting others to ſin, is in ſcripture called murder; thus the devil is ſaid to be a murderer from the beginning, becauſe he was a tempter. Not that we are to excuſe ourſelves by laying the blame of our ſins on the temptation of the devil. We cannot indeed help his tempting us; but what makes us guilty, is our conſenting to comply with his temptations; every man is tempted, when he is drawn aſide of his own luſt. Our luſts render the devil's temptations effectual.

And ſince God tempts no man, let us not tempt him. There is frequent mention in ſcripture of men's tempting God. Thus the Iſraelites are ſaid to have tempted God in the wilderneſs. The devil

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alſo tempted our Saviour to tempt God, who anſwered, thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Men are ſaid to tempt God, when they expect the protection of his providence, in an unwarrantable way. God hath promiſed to take care of good men; but if through negligence or wilfulneſs they caſt themſelves into danger, and then expect his providence to protect them, they do not truſt, but tempt God. When we wilfully run ourſelves into danger, and neglect the means of providing for our own ſafety, in expectation of the care and protection of providence; this is to tempt God.

From hence alſo appears the great reaſon we have to pray, that God would not lead us into temptation, or permit us to fall into it; for in ſcripture phraſe, God is ſaid to do, what his providence permits. The beſt of men have ſome remains of luſt, ſome irregular deſires and appetites, which will be apt to betray them to ſin, when powerful temptations are preſented; ſo that it is a great happineſs to the very beſt, to be preſerved by God's providence from them. And our greateſt ſecurity is, in being ſincerely deſirous to do well, firmly reſolved againſt ſin, and to depend on God for his grace and aſſiſtance, not to ſuffer us to fall into dangerous and violent temptations; for he who knows what our ſtrength is, "will not ſuffer "us to be tempted above what we are able."

Laſtly, the beſt way to diſarm temptations, and take away their power, is by mortifying our luſts, and ſubduing our vicious inclinations. This by the grace of God may be done, and then temptation hath loſt its greateſt advantage. The more we mortify our luſts, the leſs will the devil find in us for his temptation to work on. Men are apt to complain that they are not able to reſiſt temptations, though they continually pray for God's grace to that purpoſe. But though this is one very proper

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and neceſſary means to be uſed, yet this is not all; we muſt break off habits of ſin, ſubdue our luſts, keep under our inclinations, and then we ſhall be able to reſiſt and encounter temptations with more ſucceſs. And till we do this, in vain do we pray for God's grace, and depend on him for ſtrength to overcome the temptations that aſſault us; for his grace was never deſigned to countenance our ſloth and negligence, but to encourage and ſecond our good reſolutions and endeavours. If we expect God's grace and aſſiſtance on other terms, we tempt God, and provoke him to leave us to the power of temptations, to be "drawn away and enticed by our own luſts."

Diſcourſe CV. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Of JUSTIFICATION by FAITH and WORKS.

Tit. iii. 8.

This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.

THE apoſtle, after having ſpoken of our juſtification by grace without works of righteouſneſs, charges Titus to preſs the neceſſity of good works on thoſe who believed and embraced the goſpel; on purpoſe, as it ſeems, to prevent all miſtakes about the doctrine of juſtification by faith, and the free grace and mercy of God in Jeſus Chriſt; "not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done; but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt; which he ſhed on us abundantly, through Jeſus Chriſt our ſaviour;" (that is, by our ſolemn profeſſion of Chriſtianity at our baptiſm:) That, being "juſtified by his grace, we ſhould be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life." And then he adds, "this is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will, that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed on God, might be careful to maintain good works." They who are thus juſtified by the faith of the goſpel, ſhould not think themſelves thereby excuſed from good works, but rather be more careful

ful to maintain and practiſe them; having ſolemnly engaged ſo to do, by their embracing and profeſſing the Chriſtian faith and religion. It is they which believe in God; or ſuch, who by being baptized, have profeſſed Chriſtianity, that muſt maintain good works. For it is not improbable, that the apoſtle having juſt before ſpoken of baptiſm, may by this phraſe, believe in God, refer to the profeſſion of faith made in baptiſm, which began in theſe words, I believe in God; and then they which have believed in God, are thoſe who in baptiſm have made a ſolemn profeſſion of Chriſtianity. As if he had ſaid, "theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that all who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, ſhould be careful to maintain good works." To practiſe all Chriſtian virtues, eſpecially ſuch as are uſeful and beneficial to human ſociety, becauſe they are good and profitable unto men. The certain truth and evident credibility of this ſaying, that "they who have believed in God ſhould be careful to maintain good works;" will appear ſo, whether we conſider the great end and deſign of religion in general, or of the Chriſtian religion in particular.

And this will be very apparent, if we conſider the great end and deſign of religion in general, which is to make us happy, by poſſeſſing our minds with the belief of a God; and thoſe other principles which have a neceſſary connexion with that belief, and by obliging us to the obedience and practice of his laws. And firſt, by poſſeſſing our minds with the belief of God, and of thoſe other principles, which have a neceſſary connexion with it. Such are the belief of the divine perfections, of the infinite goodneſs, wiſdom, power, truth, juſtice, and purity of the divine nature; a firm perſuaſion of his providence, that he governs and adminiſters the affairs of the world, obſerves the

actions of men, and will require an account for them; the immortality of our ſouls, their endleſs duration after death, and the eternal rewards and puniſhments of another life. Theſe are the great principles of natural religion, excluſive of any external revelation from God; and theſe are neceſſary and fundamental to religion, "for without "faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God." There can be no ſuch thing as the practice of religion, without the belief of its principles; and what theſe are, he tells us in the next words, "he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him." But we muſt not reſt in the belief of a God and the principles of religion; for the meer belief thereof will be neither acceptable to God, nor uſeful to ourſelves. God would not have imprinted the notion of himſelf on our nature, nor required the belief of his being and providence, only that we might know there was ſuch a being who made and governs us; but that this belief might influence and oblige us to the obedience of his laws, which are the proper means of our happineſs. "To pro-"feſs that we know God, when in works we deny "him," cannot avail us, becauſe it will not be acceptable to God. And therefore,

The great end and deſign of religion, is, that our minds being poſſeſſed and prepared by the principles of religion, the belief of theſe ſhould properly influence and effectually oblige us to the obedience and practice of God's laws; which as they are the rule and meaſure of our duty, ſo are they the means whereby to obtain happineſs. Obedience to God's laws is the condition of our temporal and eternal happineſs, both in this and the other world. The promiſes, which God hath made of temporal felicity and bleſſings, are on condition of obedience to his laws; it is "godlineſs only that

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" hath the promiſe of this life as well as of the " other." And though God frequently beſtows many temporal bleſſings on very bad men, that ſuch his goodneſs might lead them to repentance; yet he never made any promiſe of temporal bleſſings to wicked men; on the contrary, he threatens them with great temporal evils and calamities: but all the promiſes, even of temporal good things, are made to them, who " keep his covenant, and remember " his commandments to do them." And this is not only the condition on which the promiſes of temporal bleſſings are ſuſpended, but generally the natural cauſe and means of theſe bleſſings; for indeed there is no moral duty enjoined by God, no virtue required from us, but what naturally tends to our temporal felicity in this world. Thus temperance and chaſtity tend to the bleſſing of health and the preſervation of our eſtates, which are ruined and deſtroyed by lewd riotous living; humility and meekneſs to our quiet and ſafety; juſtice and integrity to our reputation and honour, the chief inſtruments of temporal proſperity and ſucceſs; kindneſs, charity, and a readineſs to do good to all, in their nature tend to recommend us to the love and eſteem of all men; and to their favourable regard and aſſiſtance, ſhould we ever ſtand in need thereof. The ſame might be obſerved of all other virtues, the ſincere practice whereof is the beſt method that any wiſe man can take, to attain the higheſt happineſs, or avoid the greateſt miſeries of this world. There being no vice, no wicked practice, but what is naturally productive of ſome great temporal evil and inconvenience.

The practice of virtue and goodneſs, is alſo the neceſſary and only proper qualification, the certain and infallible means of attaining the future happineſs of another world; and without which we ſhall but hope for it in vain. As God will cer-

tainly puniſh the tranſgreſſors of his laws, ſo obedience to them can only inſure his rewards, for "without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God; Chriſt "being the author of eternal ſalvation only to them "that obey him." This the eſſential holineſs and juſtice of God ſufficiently aſſure us of, had he not declared it in his word. For in the very nature and reaſon of the thing, holineſs and goodneſs are the neceſſary and only proper qualifications for happineſs; without enjoyment of God we cannot be happy, and for this holineſs and goodneſs can only qualify us. Virtue and goodneſs are ſo eſſential to happineſs, that it is impoſſible to be attained without them. God is the fountain of happineſs, and we muſt be like him, if we will enjoy him. Could a wicked man ſteal into heaven, yet the temper and diſpoſition of his mind would be ſo unſuitable to that holy place and company, that he would be extremely miſerable even in the manſions of the bleſſed. Such a temper of mind, ſuch a guilty conſcience, as a ſinner carries with him out of this world, will accompany and remain with him in the other. And guilt being always reſtleſs and full of torment, though God ſhould not puniſh it with any poſitive infliction of pain, yet its own nature would make a man forever miſerable. So that it is vain to imagine, that without the practice of virtue and holineſs in this life, we can ever be happy in the other; indeed, a ſincere repentance of our ſins, will by God's mercy make us capable of happineſs; but not unleſs our minds, lives and actions are changed, from the love and practice of vice, to a ſtate of virtue and goodneſs; for we can hope for heaven and happineſs on no other terms, than of conſtantly leading a holy and virtuous life. What great hazard and danger then do thoſe men run, who venture their everlaſting happineſs,

pineſs, on the infinite uncertainties of a death-bed repentance? But,

The truth of this propoſition, that they "which "have believed in God, ſhould be careful to main-"tain good works;" or, that faith, and a good life, ought to accompany each other; will be yet more evident, if we conſider the end and deſign of the Chriſtian religion in particular; which was to reform the world, to purify the hearts and lives of men, from corrupt affections and wicked practices, and teach them how to excel in all kinds of virtue and goodneſs. This is frequently and expreſsly declared in the new teſtament. The great promiſe of bleſſedneſs is made to the virtue of meekneſs, patience, peaceableneſs, purity and righteouſneſs, by our Saviour in his excellent ſermon on the mount, which is the ſummary of the Chriſtian religion. And the grace of God, or the doctrine of the goſpel, "which brings ſalvation unto all men, hath appeared, teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſt, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world." In ſhort, the whole deſign and doctrine of the goſpel, is calculated to raiſe and exalt human nature to the higheſt pitch and perfection of virtue and goodneſs, and effectually to reform the hearts and lives of men.

God's merciful condeſcenſion to ſend his only ſon in our nature to live among us, and to die for us; was purely to reform mankind, and make them better. He was incarnate and came into the world, appeared in our nature, and was called Jeſus, that he might "ſave his people from their ſins. He "came to call ſinners to repentance;" to reclaim them to a better and more virtuous courſe of life, to recover mankind from a ſtate of ſin and miſery, to a ſtate of holineſs and happineſs. He was manifeſted to take away our ſins, and deſtroy the

works of the devil. The great deſign of his life was, that he might give us a perfect and familiar example of all holineſs and virtue; "I have given "you, ſaid he, an example, that ye ſhould do as I have "done." This was alſo the great deſign of his death and ſufferings. "He gave himſelf for our "ſins, that he might deliver us from this preſent "evil world," from the vicious cuſtoms and practices of it. The death and ſufferings of Chriſt did not only make expiation for our ſins, but are propoſed to us as a pattern of our mortification to ſin, and a reſurrection to a new life, and a moſt powerful argument thereto. "Chriſt died for all, that they which live ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them. He was made to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him" He who was without ſin, was made a ſacrifice for our ſins; which ſhould be a ſtrong motive and argument to us, to endeavour after the righteouſneſs of God.

And as the whole diſpenſation of the goſpel tends to this end, ſo do its doctrines, which conſiſt in the things to be believed; the duties to be practiſed; and the arguments and encouragements to the practice of thoſe duties. And all theſe have a moſt direct tendency to reform mankind, and engage us to the practice of holineſs and virtue. Whatever the Chriſtian religion propoſeth to our belief concerning God the father, the creator and governor of all things; and concerning Jeſus Chriſt our Lord; the Holy Spirit of grace; the Catholic church; the communion of ſaints; the reſurrection of the dead; and everlaſting life after death; all and each of theſe are ſo many arguments and reaſons, motives and encouragements to a good life. A ſincere faith is the great principle of charity, which is the fulfilling of the law, and comprehends the

the duties of both tables: and the ſeveral articles of the chriſtian faith ought to have a great influence on us, to the practice of holineſs and virtue. The duties enjoined by the Chriſtian religion, do alſo tend to the ſame end and deſign; I mean the laws and precepts of the goſpel, which are the rules of a good life, and in the main ſubſtance of them, are the laws of nature cleared and perfected. For Chriſt came not to deſtroy the law, which was in force before; but to explain and clear it, where through the corruption and degeneracy of mankind, it was grown obſcure; and to perfect it, by ſuperadding ſome rules and precepts of greater goodneſs and perfection, than were before enjoined. Such as to abſtain from revenge, to love our enemies, to forgive and do them good, and be perfectly reconciled to them after the greateſt provocations. So that the precepts of the Chriſtian religion are a perfect rule of virtue and goodneſs, the beſt and moſt abſolute ſyſtem of moral philoſophy that ever was in the world; containing all the rules of virtue and a good life, that are to be found in the writings of the philoſophers and wiſeſt men in all ages; and delivered to us with greater clearneſs and certainty, in a more ſimple and unaffected manner, with greater authority, force and efficacy, than any philoſopher and law-giver ever did. They teach us how to worſhip God in the beſt manner, moſt ſuitable to his nature and perfections; how to demean ourſelves towards others, with all meekneſs and humility, juſtice and integrity, kindneſs and charity; and how to govern our unruly appetites and paſſions, and keep them within the bounds of reaſon. And all theſe duties and virtues are commanded in the name and authority of God, by one commiſſioned by him, and ſent from heaven on purpoſe to inſtruct us in the nature and prac-

tice of them. So that the doctrine of the goſpel, is a plain and perfect rule of good life.

And then the Chriſtian religion contains the moſt powerful arguments and encouragements to this purpoſe; I mean the threatnings and promiſes of the goſpel. It threatens eternal miſery and puniſhment to all wilful impenitent tranſgreſſors of the laws; and this is an argument which more powerfully affects human nature than any other. Many that could not be influenced by the love of God and goodneſs, nor the hopes of everlaſting life, have been reclaimed from an evil courſe by the fear of hell, damnation, and a future judgment. To think of eternally ſuffering the terrible wrath and diſpleaſure of almighty God, of being forever miſerable without intermiſſion and end, is a diſmal conſideration to any thinking man. "For who knows the "power of God's anger? who can dwell with ever-"laſting burnings?" And yet to this amazing danger, to this intolerable miſery, do all who live in the wilful contempt and diſobedience of the laws of the goſpel, expoſe themſelves. For we read, that at "the end of the world, the ſon of man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire; there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth." And that to the wicked ſhall be ſaid, "depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And the apoſtle, ſpeaking of the laſt judgment, ſays, "the Lord Jeſus ſhall then be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." So that the goſpel gives all imaginable diſcouragement

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to the transgressors of God's laws, by denouncing the greatest dread and terror that can be presented to human nature; enough not only to restrain, but even to offer violence to nature, rather "than "be cast into hell, where the worm dies not, and "the fire is not quenched."

The promises of the gospel are also full of encouragement to obedience. We have therein the promise of pardon and forgiveness; of grace and assistance; of eternal life and happiness, if we will repent and obey God's laws. "Through Christ is "preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by "him, all who believe are justified from all things, "from which ye could not be justified by the law of "Moses." And the promise of grace and assistance to enable us to obey, is most expressly made by our Saviour, to all who will resolve sincerely to make use of it; and to be assured, that God is most ready to afford his grace and assistance, if we heartily beg it, is a mighty encouragement to well doing. So that neither the consideration of our own weakness, nor the power of our spiritual enemies, need discourage us from doing our duty; since God so freely offers us all such strength as shall be necessary to the purposes of holiness and virtue. For we may all say with St. Paul, "I am able to do all "things, through Christ which strengthens me." And eternal life is the great promise of the gospel, the crown of all the rest. "This is the promise that he "hath promised us, even eternal life." A reward so great and glorious, so infinitely beyond our service and obedience, that nothing can be more encouraging. What should not men do, "in hopes of e-"ternal life, which God that cannot lye hath pro-"mised?" The expectation of such reward, is sufficient to encourage us to do our utmost to attain it; but this cannot be done without holiness and obedience, since without that no man shall see the Lord.

Thus

Thus you may ſee, that the whole diſpenſation of the goſpel, and all its doctrines, are calculated to reform the minds and manners of men. The great deſign of the Chriſtian religion, is to clear, confirm, and perfect the natural law; to reinforce the obligation of moral duties by ſevere threatnings and greater promiſes; and to offer men more powerful grace and aſſiſtance to the practice of all goodneſs and virtue. And they do not underſtand the Chriſtian religion, who imagine any other end or deſign of it. Faith without works is dead. For men to think that the meer belief of the goſpel will ſave them without the real virtues of a good life, is a vain imagination.

But ſome will object to what has been ſaid, that this is to advance and ſet up morality; that it contradicts St. Paul's doctrine of juſtification by the free grace of God, in Jeſus Chriſt, and by faith, without the works of the law. To this I anſwer; that if by morality is meant counterfeit virtue, without the truth and reality of it, no ſuch morality is here recommended; but thoſe virtues only which are ſincere and real. It is righteouſneſs and true holineſs, the ſincere love of God and our neighbour, real meekneſs, patience, humility, ſobriety, and charity; and not the ſhew, appearances, and vain oſtentation of any of theſe virtues, which I would perſuade and preſs men to follow after. But if by moral virtues, the objectors mean ſuch as concern the manners of men, which are in truth the duties enjoined by the natural or moral law, comprehended under thoſe two great commands, the love of God, and our neighbour; then it may be affirmed, that this kind of morality is the primary and ſubſtantial part of all religion, and moſt ſtrictly required by the Chriſtian. Our Saviour came "not to deſtroy the law and the prophets, but to

"fulfil

"fulfil them;" and therefore rebuked the Pharisees, who neglected the great duties of morality, the weightier matters of the law, mercy, judgment, fidelity, and the love of God; by telling others, that "unless their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, they should "in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And that great principle and rule of moral justice, "to do to all men as we would have them do to "us;" he enjoins as an essential part of religion, the sum and substance of our whole duty to our neighbour, and of all the precepts contained in the law and the prophets. So that moral duties and virtues, are the same with Christian graces, and that holiness and righteousness which the gospel requires, and they differ only in name. They are called virtues, in relation to their intrinsical nature and goodness; and graces, in respect to their being the effect of God's holy spirit on our minds. In a word, moral duties are of primary obligation, as being bound on us by the law of nature; and Christianity hath reinforced and seconded their obligation, by more powerful motives and encouragements.

As to the second objection, that this discourse seems to contradict St. Paul's doctrine of justification, by faith without works; I answer, that St. Paul when he asserts this, does not exclude the necessity of obedience to the moral precepts of the gospel, as the condition of our final justification and absolution at the great day; to enforce which, is the tenor of his doctrine throughout all his epistles. But whenever he says, we are justified by faith without works, he means, either that the law of Moses is not necessary to our justification and salvation; that "we are not justified by the works of "the law, but by the faith of Christ," or, that any works of obedience and righteousness, will not gain

the

the favour and acceptance of God, by way of merit; for we cannot challenge any thing of God as of debt, but we owe all to his free grace and mercy, having done but our duty, when we have done our beſt; therefore to "him that worketh is the reward reckoned, not of grace but of debt." Or, laſtly, he means, that works of righteouſneſs are not neceſſary, antecedent to our firſt juſtification, and being received into a ſtate of grace and favour with God; but that men, upon their ſolemn profeſſion of Chriſtianity at their baptiſm, and declaration of repentance, and reſolutions of future amendment, "were juſtified freely by God's grace, and "ſaved by his mercy." He does not ſay, that after this ſolemn profeſſion of Chriſtianity, works of righteouſneſs were not neceſſary, to continue them in this ſtate of grace and favour with God; but on the contrary declares the neceſſity of them; "this is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will "that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have "believed in God, might be careful to maintain "good works." So that the ſeeming difference between St. Paul and St. James is eaſily reconciled. The former affirms, that a ſinner is at firſt juſtified, and received into the favour of God, by a ſincere profeſſion of the Chriſtian faith, without any works of righteouſneſs preceding. The latter affirms, that no man continues in a juſtified ſtate, and in favour with God, whoſe faith doth not bring forth good works, and manifeſt itſelf to be truly and lively, by a conſtant obedience and good life.

I have not time particularly to recommend by way of application, the great virtues of Chriſtianity, the proper and genuine fruits of the ſpirit of Chriſt, ſuch are "love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, fidelity, meekneſs, temperance; which ſhall be the ſubject of my next diſcourſe; and ſhall therefore

therefore only juſt mention thoſe duties which concern the ſeveral conditions and relations of men. Thoſe then who are teachers of others, ſhould not only be careful to "preach ſound doctrine, but "in all things ſhew themſelves patterns of good "works." Thoſe who then are ſubject to others, ſhould pay all duty and obedience to their ſuperiors; as children to their parents; ſervants to their maſters; that "they may adorn the doctrine of God "our Saviour in all things;" and thoſe who are ſubjects ſhould live in all peaceable and humble obedience to princes and magiſtrates. Thoſe of an inferior condition ſhould labour and be diligent in the work of an honeſt calling; for this is privately good and profitable unto men, and to their families; and thoſe who are above this neceſſity, and in a better capacity to maintain good works, properly ſo called; ſuch as works of piety, charity, and juſtice, ſhould be careful to promote and advance them according to their power and opportunity; becauſe theſe things are publickly good and beneficial to mankind. And may the grace of God, which bringeth ſalvation, even the goſpel of Chriſt, that hath appeared to all men, teach us to deny ungodlineſs, and worldly luſt, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. To whom be all glory and praiſe both now and ever more.

Diſcourſe CVI. Bp. *Atterbury.*

Of the FRUITS of the SPIRIT.

Gal. v. 22, 23.

But the fruit of the ſpirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs, temperance; againſt ſuch there is no law.

THE apoſtle in this chapter repreſents to us the different fruits of the fleſh, and of the ſpirit; and ſhews the oppoſition which is between them, to the end we may chuſe the one and refuſe the other. "The works of the fleſh are manifeſt; "theſe are adultery, fornication, witchcraft, variance, "wrath, ſtriſe, &c." But the fruits of the ſpirit are more difficult to be known, it requiring ſome care and diligence to diſtinguiſh them from counterfeit graces. Theſe mentioned in the text, are the chief and principal, but not all the fruits of the ſpirit; however they are ſufficient to diſcover whether the ſpirit of God dwells in us. And to encourage us to practiſe the graces of the holy ſpirit, and to avoid the works of the fleſh, St. Paul aſſures us, that "if "we live after the fleſh we ſhall die; but if thro' "the ſpirit, we do mortify the deeds of the body, "we ſhall live." That is, if we bring forth theſe fruits of the holy ſpirit, by the practice of theſe graces, we ſhall not be condemned, nor liable to thoſe puniſhments which thoſe are expoſed to, who give themſelves up to the undue gratification of their ſenſual appetites and deſires.

Of

Of the fruits of the ſpirit, the firſt here mentioned, is love, (in the original, charity) which in general imports piety to God, and good-will towards men. But in this place it ſeems to be reſtrained to benevolence and loving-kindneſs towards our fellow-creatures. Indeed, this love of our neighbour is not only the chief and principal, but the ſource and original of all thoſe other graces, called the fruits of the ſpirit. Our joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs, temperance, do all proceed from that ſpirit of love, which the Chriſtian religion infuſes into the minds of its profeſſors. He that ſeriouſly conſiders, that we have all one lord and maſter, one faith, one baptiſm, and one hope of arriving at the ſame reſt and haven for our ſouls; muſt think it highly reaſonable, that we ſhould be of one heart and mind. If we are all travelling to our father's houſe, why ſhould we fall out by the way, and break that unity of the ſpirit, in the bond of peace, which alone can make us fit inhabitants of the heavenly Jeruſalem. The nature of pure and undefiled religion is to unite the minds of its diſciples, to calm the diſorders of their paſſions, to reſtrain their inordinate appetites, and cement their affections to each other. For as God is love, the better we love and ſerve him, the more ſhall we be like him; and ſhall thereby the more partake of this divine quality, of loving our neighbour, doing good to all men, and rendering ourſelves beneficial to others: not only in relieving the poor, but in employing our time, parts and talents, which God has entruſted us with, to advance his glory and promote the welfare of our neighbour. To feed him when hungry, to clothe him when naked, to inform him when ignorant, to reprove him when doing evil, and encourage him when doing well; and to perform all thoſe good offices which we ſhould like to have done to us, were we in his con-

condition. And it is an obſervation worth notice, that all the great and cardinal virtues of the Chriſtian religion are ſocial; ſuch as tend to promote the welfare of ſocieties, to ſupport government, to make people proſper and flouriſh; by being mutually helpful and aſſiſting to one another. Indeed, wicked and ungodly men have made religion ſubſervient to very different purpoſes; to be the occaſion of the great diſturbances, bloody wars and deplorable devaſtations, that have happened in the world; and to ſanctify the moſt villainous attempts. But this is not the fault of religion, (for the beſt things may be applied to the worſt purpoſes) but of the men, who only pretend to be what they are not. Thus is love the proper and genuine fruit of the holy ſpirit. I proceed to ſhew, what is meant by joy, another fruit of the ſpirit.

This ſpiritual joy is of the ſame nature, with what is called, joy in the Holy Ghoſt. Such a joy as hath the holy ſpirit for its author, and can only lodge in a holy and ſanctified ſoul; by which a man is pleaſed and delighted to ſee men love and ſerve God, and advance his glory in the world. As when the conſideration of God's wonderful goodneſs incites us to praiſe and magnify his great name, filling our hearts with joy and gladneſs. When we ſympathiſe with others in the good they receive; and with the bleſſed angels in heaven, rejoice at the converſion of a ſinner, and take delight in ſeeing him turn from the evil of his ways. This is that ſpiritual joy, which is oppoſed to a narrow, ſelfiſh temper, when men ſeek after nothing but their own advantage, and will do good to none but themſelves. Or, what is much worth, when men are envious and malicious, and hate that others ſhould enjoy the good things of life; and are well pleaſed when any affliction or misfortune happens to their neighbour. This is a temper of mind directly contrary

trary to that joy, which is the fruit of the ſpirit; and much reſembles thoſe apoſtate ſpirits, who make it their buſineſs to reduce mankind into the ſame deplorable ſtate of miſery with themſelves.

The third fruit of the ſpirit mentioned in the text is peace; or a mind ſtudious of preſerving peace among men. A Chriſtian and charitable deſire to maintain peace with the whole world; an earneſt endeavour to make up differences and quarrels, and to reconcile ſuch as by any unhappy accident have been at variance. When men are of a pacific and healing temper, ready to forgive injuries themſelves, and to compoſe the exorbitant paſſions of other men, this is one of the bleſſed fruits and effects of the Holy Spirit; ſuch peace-makers as theſe, of ſo heavenly diſpoſition of mind, ſhall certainly be bleſſed in this world and the next. But very contrary to this is that deviliſh and wicked temper, which takes delight to live in contention and ſtrife; who make it their buſineſs to ſet others together by the ears, and like Solomon's whiſperers, to ſeparate the neareſt friends. When men break the public peace, by fomenting unquiet and turbulent ſpirits, making diviſions and parties; or elſe diſturb the quiet and contentment of private families, by whiſpering, tale-bearing, uncharitable cenſures, or uncertain ſurmiſes and reports; or widening the differences of ſuch as are at variance, by improving a ſlight miſunderſtanding into an open quarrel; this is a temper and diſpoſition quite oppoſite to that which is the fruit of the Holy ſpirit.

After peace, follows long-ſuffering, or forbearing one another; rather enduring ſome injuries and affronts, than to vindicate ourſelves. A good man is not eaſily provoked, but is willing to hope the beſt of others; and tho' he is not poſſeſſed of a

ſtoical inſenſibility, but can eaſily diſtinguiſh a kindneſs from an injury, and takes exact notice of the different entertainment he meets with in the world; yet his Chriſtian prudence and diſcretion teaches him not to mind every trifling injury and ſmall affront, but to paſs by and forgive the greateſt, when he ſees any hopes of repentance; and that his enemy relents, and is ſorry for his unjuſt dealing. This is that long-ſuffering mentioned in the text, to which is joined gentleneſs and goodneſs. Theſe are much of the ſame import, and denote that calmneſs of temper, ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, pleaſantneſs of converſation, inoffenſiveneſs of behaviour; in a word, that humanity which is a grace of the holy ſpirit, influencing mens lives and converſation. For we muſt always endeavour to do as much good as we can, to be uſeful in our ſeveral ſtations; we muſt not only forgive injuries, and be of a peaceable quiet temper; but muſt lay aſide all ſourneſs and moroſeneſs of temper. We muſt be of a meek and humble, a kind and condeſcending, a courteous and inoffenſive behaviour; and ſo recommend the goſpel of our Saviour to others, as to render it lovely and amiable in the ſight of all men. God in the holy ſcripture is repreſented to us by the lamb and the dove, the moſt innocent, mild and gentle of all creatures; and if we will partake of this godlike temper of mind, we muſt avoid all pride and ſuperciliouſneſs, moroſeneſs and ill humour.

The next qualification is faith or fidelity; that is, truth in keeping our promiſes, performing our bargain, compact and agreements, tho' it be to our hurt and diſadvantage; and even was there no witneſs thereto, but only our own conſcience. This is the foundation of all juſtice, without it we cannot be juſt and honeſt men; much leſs good, pious and religious perſons. Meekneſs being of the ſame ſignification

nification with gentleneſs and goodneſs; I proceed to conſider temperance, which is the laſt mentioned in the text.

By temperance is meant the governing our inordinate unruly paſſions; the moderate and rational uſe of meats and drinks, of the pleaſures and enjoyments of life. Indeed, according to the vulgar notion, temperance conſiſts only in the moderate uſe of meats and drinks; but tho' this is an eminent inſtance of temperance, yet in ſtrictneſs of ſpeaking, he who knows how to govern his paſſions, ſo as to love and hate, to fear and be angry; to bound and limit his deſires after pleaſures, riches and honours, according to reaſon; ſuch a man may be eſteemed truly temperate. For temperance is properly the governing all our deſires, paſſions and appetites by the laws of right reaſon; and to ſubmit all the faculties of our ſoul, all the powers of our body, to thoſe rules which Chriſt hath laid down in the goſpel. So that he is the temperate man who hath ſubdued his paſſions, and doth not indulge himſelf in any extravagant courſe of living; or that does not give himſelf up to any manner of exceſs, either in meat, drink, or apparel; in the purſuit of riches, pleaſures, or preferment; nor lets looſe the reins to anger, luſt, or revenge: but ſerves God diligently and induſtriouſly in his calling or ſtation, and reſts contented with that portion, which the wiſe governor of the world is pleaſed to allot him. This is that temperance, which is the fruit of the ſpirit, and completes the character here given in the text, of a truly religious and virtuous perſon.

But it may be proper to enquire in what ſenſe theſe graces are called the "fruits of the Holy "Spirit;" ſince among the heathens many were eminent for ſome of theſe virtues. They were

juſt, ſober and temperate, and made it their buſineſs to do good in the world. They practiſed theſe virtues in ſo high a degree, as to ſhame thoſe Chriſtians among us, who pretend to greater holineſs and perfection. What then is the difference between the virtues of a Heathen, and the graces of a Chriſtian? I anſwer this, that they proceed from different principles. The virtuous actions of Chriſtians proceed from the operation of the holy ſpirit of God, which are the fruits of the ſpirit. Every one who is baptized into the church of Chriſt, enters into a firm and ſolemn covenant with God; he promiſes to be obedient to all the laws of God, and God engages to enable him to perform this vow and promiſe. He will grant him the aſſiſtance of his holy ſpirit, which will take poſſeſſion of his ſoul, and influence all his actions. Indeed, he will not work in us irreſiſtibly, ſo as to oblige us to do good againſt our wills; but he will furniſh us with ſuch a competent meaſure of ſpiritual ſtrength, as, in concurrence with our own endeavours, will enable us to perform whatſoever God requires. So that the Holy Spirit is the principal of all thoſe actions which flow from grace; but the virtuous actions of heathens flow only from the dark remains of natural light, and the imperfect dictates of improved reaſon; which tho' it may diſcover part of our duty, yet can never ſupply us with ſufficient power to perform it. Beſides, they acted by different motives. The Heathen is moved chiefly by ſome temporal advantage; he loves virtue for thoſe ſenſual emoluments and rewards which attend it; but the Chriſtian has an eye to that recompence of reward, which is to come after this ſhort life is ended. His hope is not here, but he expects and waits for an eternal never-fading crown of glory. They alſo aim at a different

rent end. The Heathen principally deſigns his own glory; but the Chriſtian has in view the glory of God, and obedience to his laws. Theſe are the chief differences between a virtuous Heathen and a religious Chriſtian; or between virture and grace; by which it appears that the ſame actions may be of different natures, according to the different circumſtances of things. I ſhall now make a few inferences from what has been ſaid.

And we may hence learn, wherein conſiſts the principal duties of the Chriſtian religion; which are love, peace, juſtice, and temperance. Religion is not here made to conſiſt in any external rites and performances, in our being liſted members of the true church, or of any ſect or party of Chriſtians; in the ſole perfection of an orthodox faith, or in the performance of the devotional parts of religion; ſuch as appearing before God in public, hearing and reading his word: but in practiſing the precepts of Chriſtianity, in leading our lives and converſations according to the goſpel, in ſubduing our paſſions and appetites; in living juſtly, ſoberly and temperately; in maintaining a ſincere and univerſal charity both towards God and men. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do "juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." Theſe are the chief and principal duties that God requires of us; but then we muſt not leave the others undone.

Hence we may alſo diſcover, whether we have the ſpirit of God, or not. This is an enquiry of the utmoſt importance, for if we have not God's ſpirit, we are in a loſt and undone condition, as to all the hopes of happineſs in another world. The beſt way to know this, is to conſider, whether we bring forth the fruits of the ſpirit, mentioned in the text. Which tho' they are not

all of them, yet theſe are the chief and principal, and ſufficient to diſcover to any man what his condition is as to another life, and what his ſtate will be hereafter. Let us therefore ſeriouſly aſk ourſelves, do we love God and our neighbour? are we peaceable, juſt and temperate? do we govern our appetites and paſſions? are we content with our lot and portion in this world, and can chearfully ſubmit to God's will, in all conditions, and under all calamities, without murmuring and repining? If we find in ourſelves theſe fruits of the ſpirit, we may be aſſured that the ſpirit of God is in us; that we have received the adoption of children, or heirs of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. But on the contrary, if we find that we are of a malicious, envious, revengeful, and implacable temper; that we are given up to unlawful luſts, any ambitious or ſiniſter views; if we indulge our inordinate paſſions beyond meaſure and reaſon; if we are of a covetous ſordid principle, not willing to do good offices to others; if we are factious, turbulent and ſeditious; uneaſy to government, and troubleſome to our neighbours, either by lying, backbiting, tale-bearing, envying or railing; or are of a proud, cenſorious and uncharitable temper; we may then certainly conclude, that we are in a wrong way, and are the children, not of God, but of our father the devil. For theſe are manifeſtly the works of the fleſh, and therefore called the works of the devil, and we are his ſervants if we do his work. It will not avail us at the laſt day, tho' we cry, Lord, Lord, and make an open profeſſion of religion; nay, tho' we have "prophe-"ſied in his name, and done many wonderful "works." That is, tho' we ſhould preach the goſpel to others, and perform miracles in confirmation of it; yet if we do not practiſe its precepts,

cepts, our Lord and Saviour in that day will bid us depart from him, because we are workers of iniquity. I would not be mistaken; a good man may be guilty of many sins thro' the frailty and infirmity of his nature; nay, even presumptuous sins, as David was: But then he washes off the guilt by a solemn and unfeigned repentance; he endeavours to obtain God's pardon by a long course of contrition, and a thorough reformation of life, and a sincere and hearty desire to live better for the future. He brings forth fruits meet for repentance, even those fruits of the spirit, which are love, joy, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against which there is no law; and to which the word of God promiseth eternal happiness.

But if we live in the spirit, we ought also to walk in the spirit. God is a pure and holy being, and takes delight in those who bear his image and similitude. And the gifts and graces of his spirit are bestowed upon us, that we may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and our hearts become a fit habitation for his holy spirit to dwell in. And therefore the more holy we are, the more shall we resemble God, and conform our minds to the divine nature; and the more shall we love, serve and please him. It is the peculiar office of the holy spirit, to sanctify and make us holy; and the more we partake of it, the more exact and regular will be our lives. For the true notion of a spiritual life, is not a life wholly spent in the devotional part of religion; but according to the rules of reason, and the dictates of God's holy word, which will influence all our thoughts, words and actions. The holy spirit will suggest good thoughts in our minds, inspire us with holy and generous resolutions, and incite and allure us to good and virtuous actions. This will make us fruitful and

to abound in every good work; our actions will naturally follow the prevailing intereſts of our minds, and our wills purſue the dictates of our underſtanding. If our thoughts are taken up with the delight of this world, and our minds allured with ſenſual pleaſures; then our chief employment will be to gratify our irregular appetites, and obtain ſuch things as are pleaſing and delightful to us: But if we are heartily convinced of the danger which theſe periſhing enjoyments expoſe us to, if we are ſenſible of our folly in purſuing them, and upon mature deliberation wiſely prefer a holy and ſpiritual life, before a carnal and ſenſual one; then will our choice and inclination lead us to live ſuch lives, as God and our own conſciences will approve of, agreeable to the dictates of reaſon, the dignity and excellency of our ſpiritual and immortal part.

God has promiſed us his divine aſſiſtance, whereby we ſhall receive ſufficient power and ability to perform our duty, and walk in the way of his commandments. So that it muſt be our own fault, if after we have entered upon a regenerate ſtate, we return to a ſenſual and wicked life. From hence ariſes a moſt ſtrict and powerful obligation for us to live an holy ſpiritual life; becauſe the neglecting of it would be to deſpiſe God's grace and grieve his holy ſpirit, by ſlighting his motions; which will provoke him to leave and forſake us, to give us up to our worſt enemies, to the conduct of our own vicious inclination, and to ſuffer us without any check or remorſe, to proceed in our ſinful courſes with pleaſure and delight. But if we have once entered upon a regenerate ſtate, have taſted how good and gracious God is, and pretend to live by the ſpirit, and yet do not; our condemnation and puniſhment will be greater than other mens. For we had better not have known the ways of

righteouſneſs,

righteouſneſs, than afterwards to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto us. It muſt needs be a great aggravation of our ſin, if after we have performed our duty, and experienced the grace of God aſſiſting us to vanquiſh and overcome our ſpiritual enemies; we ſhould ſuffer ourſelves to be again led captive by the enemy. This would be a ſad ſcandal thrown upon Chriſtianity, and be in effect to diſown our profeſſion, and renounce our baptiſm. If then we have entered upon a new and ſpiritual life, let us never again return to folly, nor ſuffer ourſelves to be deluded by thoſe pleaſures of ſin which are but for a ſeaſon; but let us implore the aſſiſtance of God's holy ſpirit, improve that grace which he has given, comply with his counſels and motions, in all things follow his guidance and direction; which will enable us to walk in the paths of virtue, and to perſevere to the end in a holy and godly life.

It is the duty of every good Chriſtian to grow in grace, to improve in virtue and piety, to proceed from one degree of grace to another; for if we do not go forward in the ways of virtue, we are aſſuredly turning aſide to the crooked paths of error, and vice. If our good habits do not daily encreaſe, and that we are not deeper rooted in the fear and love of God, it is a certain ſign that our ſpiritual life languiſhes and decays, and that we are in a declining dangerous condition. Let it then be our great care to entertain the motions, and cheriſh the bleſſed influence of God's holy ſpirit. And ſince its gifts and graces are the ſprings and principles of all ſpiritual life in our ſouls, and which are not wrought in us after an irreſiſtible manner, but in conjunction with our own diligent endeavours; it from hence evidently appears, that our great care ought to be, to purge and cleanſe our ſouls from every unclean thing, that they may be a ſuitable habita-

habitation for God's holy ſpirit to dwell in. And by complying with its motions and influences, and making a good uſe of that grace which God has given us, we ſhall encreaſe in favour with God and man, and at laſt obtain that everlaſting life, which he hath promiſed, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe CVII. Abp. *Sharpe.*

The OBLIGATIONS on CHRISTIANS to practiſe RELIGION.

Epheſ. iv. 1.

—Walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith you are called.

AS God hath brought us out of the darkneſs of Heatheniſm into the light of the goſpel, we ſhould therefore walk as children of light, and "worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." We profeſs a pure and holy religion, that promiſes its followers ineſtimable privileges and benefits. This is our calling, our vocation, and our lives ought to bear ſome reſemblance thereto. The frame of our minds, and the tenor of our actions, ſhould hold ſome proportion with the dignity and mighty advantages of this high calling in Chriſt Jeſus. For a man to be a Chriſtian in name only, to own Chriſt for his Lord, and the goſpel for his rule; and yet to live like a heathen, an atheiſt, or an epicure, is ſuch a piece of inconſiſtency and unreaſonableneſs, as not to admit of any apology. Would Chriſtians but ſeriouſly enquire what the nature of their profeſſion or vocation is, and what benefits they expect from it, they need no other inſtructor, no further motives or arguments to oblige them to live worthy of it. To aſſiſt Chriſtians therefore in making theſe enquiries, I ſhall conſider our vocation in general, and ſhew what obli-

obligations that lays upon us; and then obſerve ſome particulars, which will enforce the general conſideration.

I begin with our Chriſtian vocation in general. And let me aſk, what ſort of life doth ſo clear, ſo full, ſo excellent a diſcovery of God's will, for the ſalvation of mankind by Jeſus Chriſt, require of all thoſe who have the knowledge of it? how ſhould they live who are called from darkneſs to light; from ignorance of God and themſelves, to a plain and clear knowledge of his will; from the bondage of death, to a certain hope of a glorious immortality; from a profane and impious worſhip, to a holy, pure and reaſonable ſervice? Will not nature teach us that in proportion to any ſuperior advantages which any one has above others, that ſuch a perſon ought to be more exact and regular in his life, more careful to approve himſelf to God, more ſtudious of his will, more zealous and induſtrious in his ſervice, than other men, who have not thoſe means or privileges? Now, this is our calling, this is the vocation of Chriſtians; and yet how unworthy are we of it, unleſs it produces thoſe effects in us? nay, this our vocation will turn to our unſpeakable miſery and puniſhment, if it be not attended with ſuch fruits. "If I had not, "ſays our Saviour, come and ſpoken to them, they "had not had ſin; but now they have no cloak for "their ſin." There was ſomething to be ſaid for men who lived in Heathen darkneſs, who had no other guide but the mere light of nature, and that greatly darkened and obſcured, by an univerſal degeneracy and corruption of manners. The "times "of this ignorance God might be ſuppoſed to wink "at, or lightly puniſh ſuch men for their ſins, "becauſe they knew not their maſter's will, and "therefore ſhould be beaten only with few ſtripes." Nay, there was ſomething alſo to be ſaid in excuſe

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for thoſe who lived a worldly, ſenſual, and vicious life, under the Jewiſh diſpenſation; who, though they were in covenant with God, and had his laws and promiſes, yet both theſe being in appearance of an earthly temporal nature, and in a manner relating only to the things of this life, it was not eaſy for them to raiſe up their minds above this world; in regard they wanted both light and encouragement, to put them upon a vigorous purſuit of holineſs here, and happineſs hereafter. There was ſomething therefore to be ſaid in apology for the Jews; but for us who are under the Chriſtian diſpenſation, who have been inſtructed in the whole will of God, and that by no leſs a maſter than his own ſon; we who have the ſtrongeſt demonſtrations given us of another life after this, the moſt explicit promiſes that we ſhall be partakers of it, if we obey God's laws. We who have the plaineſt and fulleſt rules to direct us in our obedience, ſo that none how ignorant ſoever, if honeſt and ſincere, can poſſibly miſs of their way to heaven: Laſtly, we who have all this made out to us with ſo much clearneſs of evidence, as to leave no place for doubting in any reaſonable mind: I ſay, what can be ſaid for us, if after theſe great opportunities put into our hands, of entering into God's everlaſting reſt, any of us fall ſhort through diſobedience, or unbelief. Happy we Chriſtians above all men, in having theſe clear diſcoveries of God's will, theſe ineſtimable advantages, if we do embrace and entertain them, improve and make that uſe of them we ought to do, by leading a holy, pure, and heavenly life; but certainly if we do not, we ſhall be the more inexcuſably wretched of any "under heaven; much better had it been for us never to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after we have known it, to depart from the holy command-ment given unto us."

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If we conſider in how much darkneſs great part of the world lies, and what a glorious light ſhines forth to us Chriſtians: how little hopes or means they have of everlaſting ſalvation, and how abundantly God hath furniſhed us with both; ſo that nothing is wanting to our being everlaſtingly happy, but only our own choice and concurrence: how ought this conſideration to affect us! What infinite thanks do we owe to our gracious God for theſe unſpeakable mercies! And how can we expreſs our thankfulneſs but by loving him, and devoting ourſelves entirely to his ſervice? There are few nations in the world ſo barbarous, as not to be of ſome religion or other. They believe a God, and that his providence governs the world: even the generality of pagans expect another life after this, wherein good men ſhall be rewarded, and wicked men puniſhed. But then theſe general fundamental truths, are ſo eclipſed with error, and a multitude of falſe and wicked principles, that their condition is very deplorable. What falſe notions have they of God and his perfections! What horrible idolatry and ſuperſtition in all their worſhip! How ſlenderly grounded is their belief of another life! How ignorant of the will of God and the way of recommending themſelves to his favour! How ridiculous and impious are the methods they have recourſe to for this purpoſe! But bleſſed be God, we Chriſtians have none of theſe difficulties to ſtruggle with. We have a holy and pure religion taught us by Chriſt our Lord, every way worthy of God, and fitted to all the neceſſities of man. We have a religion that teaches us to ſerve God ſuitable to his, and our nature; that impoſeth nothing, but what is good and excellent in itſelf, tending to the perfection of our natures, to the peace and happineſs both of private and public ſocieties. Our religion leaves us

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not to uncertain conjectures about a future ſalvation, but we have God's expreſs word and promiſe for it, ſealed by the blood of his own ſon, confirmed by his reſurrection from the dead, and aſcenſion into the kingdom of heaven. It not only directs us how to get to that glorious place where our Saviour is, but has ſo plainly deſcribed to us the way that leads to it, that if we are not extremely wanting ourſelves, we cannot fail of arriving thither. The Chriſtian religion recommends itſelf to our reaſon and underſtanding, having nothing trifling, or abſurd in it.

Laſtly, our religion has all the proof and evidence, that in the nature of the thing can be given. It is a religion predicted by the prophets; owned by God's own voice from heaven; eſtabliſhed by an innumerable multitude of ſigns, wonders, and miracles, for a hundred years together; atteſted by the glorious reſurrection of our Saviour from the grave, and his viſible aſcenſion into heaven; confirmed by the lives and wonderful actions of innumerable wiſe, good and divine men, who profeſſed it; and aſſerted by the ſufferings of many thouſand glorious martyrs and confeſſors; who from age to age refuſed no torments, no cruelties of death, to ſhew how firmly they believed it. This then being the caſe of the Chriſtian religion; this the happy and glorious vocation to which we are called by our Lord Jeſus, what obligation do we lie under above all the reſt of mankind, to be ſerious in the ſervice of God; pure and unblameable in our lives, and to abound in "all the fruits of "righteouſneſs? What manner of men ought we "to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs?" Can there be any among us who "names the name "Chriſt, and yetnot depart from all iniquity?" Is it poſſible, that where ſo glorious a light ſhines forth, there ſhould be any atheiſts or unbelievers?

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Any ſuch thing as profaneneſs, adultery, whoredom, drunkenneſs, envy, malice, covetouſneſs, or the like? Such as theſe are the proper fruits of the heathen ſtate, out of which Chriſt hath delivered us: and none of them ſhould be found among Chriſtians. Theſe are the works of darkneſs, and fit only for ſuch people where the light of the goſpel never appeared; but are no way becoming thoſe, who profeſs to believe in our Lord Jeſus. The Heathens were many of them aſhamed of ſuch practices, and therefore ſhould ſhame Chriſtians; many of them, notwithſtanding the great darkneſs and ignorance they lay under, the multitude of ill examples they had before them, yet ſo preſerved the dignity of human nature, as to keep themſelves pure from thoſe crimes and immoralities I have before mentioned; nay, many of them, without any other power but that of nature, have, through the bleſſing of God upon their endeavours, not only lived free from open vice, but have been indeed patterns of virtue. They have been exemplary for juſtice and temperance, fortitude and patience, fidelity and truth, munificence and liberality, moderation and contempt of the world. Several ſuch inſtances there are, not only among the antient Greeks and Romans, but among the modern Indians and Japoneſe, and other barbarous nations. How much more in this are they to be commended and applauded, than even ſome of us who paſs among the better ſort of Chriſtians? And what an eternal ſhame and reproach is it, that the generality of us are not to be named with many of the pagans, for true virtue and religion? Is this "to walk worthy "of the calling wherewith we are called?" Is this to adorn the doctrine of God in all things? They with all their ignorance, and all their errors in matters of religion, lived honeſtly, had a ſenſe of God and virtue; but a great many of us, with all

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our light, encouragements, and assistances live like brutes, like men without God, slaves to innumerable follies, lusts and passions. But let us not deceive ourselves, "God is no respecter of per-"sons." I heartily wish that these poor heathens, of whom we generally have so mean an opinion, may not one day rise up in judgment against us Christians, and condemn us.——I have hitherto considered our vocation in general, as it is the profession of the Christian religion; and by this general account, we may easily perceive, what great obligations are laid upon us Christians above all men, to lead holy, pure, and virtuous lives; and how unworthy we are of that name, if we do act inconsistently thereto; but of this we shall be more convinced, if we consider what has been done for, or promised by us on the taking this calling upon ourselves; which brings me to observe some particulars, in order to enforce what has been said. And,

Let us seriously consider what kind of life should that man lead, who, through the infinite kindness of the son of God, is rescued from hell and death; redeemed from the wrath of God, and the insupportable vengeance of eternal fire, which his sins did justly deserve: and this at no less price than the son of God's laying down his life, and shedding his most precious blood, that he might thereby make a propitiation for us. This then is the case of every Christian. And ought we who have been pardoned so many, so high and great provocations, to continue in our sins? Should we take advantage of God's inexpressible mercies to multiply our affronts against heaven, and "because "grace hath abounded, that sin may much more "abound?" Surely every man, who is sensible what it cost the son of God to redeem sinners, should have other thoughts, and reason thus; that

ſince our dear Lord hath, at ſo vaſt a price, obtained the pardon of our ſins, and by calling us to his ſervice hath given us a title to that pardon, we ſhould, above all things, take care not again to offend our God, and provoke his diſpleaſure againſt us. And whoever has any ſenſe of ingenuity, cannot but look upon this aſtoniſhing kindneſs of our Lord, in redeeming us with his blood, as the greateſt obligation that could poſſibly be laid on us, to renounce, abandon, and hate with a perfect hatred, all ſin and wickedneſs, of every kind and degree.

Let us aſk ourſelves what kind of converſation becomes that man, who hath ſolemnly dedicated himſelf to God; who hath publickly profeſſed to renounce the devil and all his works, the vanities of the world, and the luſts of the fleſh, and devoted himſelf forever to his creator and redeemer? For this is the caſe of us Chriſtians, by the engagement we have entered into at baptiſm, and which many ſince have often renewed at the Lord's ſupper; ſo that being thus ſolemnly conſecrated to God and Chriſt, we are not at our own diſpoſal, but have entirely given up ourſelves to God, to be diſpoſed of by him. Let us ſeriouſly think of this, and then judge what kind of converſation will be worthy our calling; whether, without the greateſt guilt, we can allow ourſelves in any known, open courſe of wilful ſin? Whether being thus devoted to God, we ſhall not be falſe to our engagements, if we do not make his ſervice the chief buſineſs and deſign of our lives?

Let us aſk ourſelves further, what kind of life ſhould that man lead, who is called into the neareſt relation to God, and from a child of wrath, and ſlave of Satan, is made the ſon of God, the brother of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and "a joint heir

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" with him of the inheritance of God?" Certainly, a perſon who is thus highly dignified, ought to have a great, noble, and generous ſoul, ſuitable to that quality to which he is ſo highly advanced; and ſhould behave in all circumſtances, bravely and worthily, ſo as not to diſparage that alliance, with which he is honoured. For as we are Chriſtians, and profeſs Chriſt's religion, we are " the children of " the moſt high, and the ſon of God is not aſham- " ed to call us brethren; we are made kings and " prieſts unto God our father. We are his friends, " his favourites, his choſen ones." Theſe are the titles beſtowed upon Chriſtians by the inſpired writers. Let us therefore conſider theſe privileges of our calling, and then judge what kind of converſation becomes us.

Let us aſk ourſelves likewiſe, what ſort of life he is to lead, who owns the goſpel of Chriſt, for the rule of his actions, and who hath engaged himſelf to obſerve all its commands? Whoever reads the goſpel, knows what kind of precepts it contains, and muſt be convinced, that no rules of living ever before given, can compare with it, for perfectneſs and exactneſs. Indeed, it lays no great ſtreſs on any kind of ceremonies or outward obſervances; God never puts any value upon theſe, in any religion. But for the things which are intrinſically good, and do really perfect and adorn human nature, and accompliſh the mind of man: of theſe the Chriſtian inſtitution, or the goſpel, contains the higheſt, the nobleſt, the exacteſt, and moſt ſevere that ever were eſtabliſhed. There all ſorts of purity and holineſs, every kind and degree of virtue are recommended, and whatever hath but the appearance of vice and ſin, is diſcouraged; there we are required to be " holy as " God is holy; to be merciful, as he is merciful;" and to reſtrain our diſorderly deſires and ap-

petites. We are not only forbid to commit adultery, to kill, ſteal, or defraud our neighbours of their right, or the like; but even our thoughts, if conſenting to ſuch things, are by the goſpel declared culpable.

As we muſt not commit adultery, ſo we muſt "not look upon a woman to luſt after her." As we muſt not defraud our neighbour, ſo neither muſt "we covet what belongs to him." As we muſt not kill, ſo neither muſt we be angry without a cauſe. As we muſt not do an injury, ſo neither muſt we revenge any done to us. As we muſt not be ungrateful to our friends, ſo neither muſt "we hate our enemies, but do them all the good "we can." And thus as to all other inſtances of our duty. And what a holy, pure, juſt and excellent religion is this? Worthy to come from God, worthy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt to promulgate, and moſt worthy of us to be obſerved. And therefore let every one, who names the goſpel of Chriſt, "walk worthy of this his vocation, by ſeriouſly endeavouring to bring all his thoughts, words and deeds, to a conformity with the laws of it."

And, in the next place, let us aſk ourſelves how that man ought to live, who profeſſes to imitate the example of our Lord Jeſus? Our calling, our vocation, is to be the diſciples of Chriſt; and the very notion of being a diſciple, is to live according to the pattern of him whom we call our maſter. And therefore, if we pretend to be Chriſt's diſciples, if we take him for our pattern, then we muſt "walk as he walked, be humble and "meek, and lowly in heart," for he was ſo in the greateſt degree. We muſt not be arrogant or aſſuming, but deſcend to the meaneſt offices of civility and charity. We muſt be eaſy and gentle to all about us, not eaſily provoked, but be ready

to forgive the injuries done us, for this was the way of our master. He was gentle to all men; patient under the greatest sufferings, and so regardless of injuries, that he not only forgave those who had the malice to take away his life, but he heartily prayed for them. He never sought himself, or his own interest, but only the glory of God. And can we then be called his followers, who seek nothing but ourselves in all our designs and actions; who have no regard to God's glory, but only to our own interests? He was full of tenderness and compassion to all who needed his help; nay, he went about doing good, it was the business of his life. And can we think it becomes us his disciples, to be hard hearted, pitiless, and unmerciful; to be surly, selfish, or covetous; to live useless and unprofitably in our generations? When God has given us sundry talents, means and opportunities, whereby we may do much good, and be very useful to others in our place and station. He, though full of employment, yet constantly had times of retirement from the world, to perform the spiritual exercises of prayer, meditation, and communion with God: Nay, he sometimes spent whole nights in those exercises; and can we his disciples find no leisure for our devotions? No time for communion with God? Can we satisfy ourselves with now and then only putting up a few cold, formal, heartless prayers to him? Again,

Our Lord was very contented, thankful, and heartily resigned to God, though he had not so much as "an house to put his head in;" and can it then become us his followers, to be uneasy under our present circumstances, or to repine at God's dispensations to us? Is it decent that we should be discontented at our condition, when our Lord and master, who had so little share of worldly goods,

was very thankful to God for whatever happened to him. Let us all then look into our Lord's life, and obſerve how he behaved, whereby we may be more fully convinced, how pure and holy we ought to live, if we would walk worthy of our Chriſtian vocation.

Let us further aſk ourſelves, what ſort of life we ought to lead, who by our admiſſion to this high calling have ſuch extraordinary aſſiſtance from the Holy Spirit. Every one, who is a member of Chriſt, has from God a promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt to aſſiſt him in his duty. Nay, our Saviour has given us his holy ſpirit, not only to ſtand by and ſupport us, but alſo to be in us, as a principle of life, to dwell within us, to take our ſouls and bodies for his habitation; ſo that every true Chriſtian may, in the moſt proper ſenſe, be ſaid to be a temple of God, a tabernacle where the Holy Spirit is pleaſed to inhabit. What obligations then are laid upon us, to keep ourſelves holy and undefiled, both as to ſoul, and body? What glorious things are expected from us? What excellent attainments ought we to make in every virtue and grace, who have a divine power within us, to ſtrengthen us in all difficulties, to ſupport us under all trials and temptations, and to carry us on to the moſt noble undertakings and performances?

Laſtly, let us aſk ourſelves, what kind of life ſhould he lead, who is called out of this world, and has his name enrolled among the citizens of the next; who by his profeſſion declares himſelf "to be a ſtranger and a pilgrim here, and to look "for an abiding and continuing city, not made "with hands, eternal in the heavens?" Doth it become ſuch to live as many do, who profeſs Chriſtianity; to be ſo wholly intent upon the buſineſs and deſigns of this earth, as if we were always

always to live here: To make it the work of our lives to be contriving and projecting for our ſecular conveniencies or delights, and but very ſeldom lift up our minds to God, and attend the concernments of our everlaſting ſtate? Can this be thought a converſation becoming one, who bears the character of a Chriſtian? Certainly, no: He that hath laid up his treaſures in heaven, will not be much concerned about the treaſures of this earth. A Chriſtian ſhould ſit looſe from the world, and all the vanities of it. He ſhould uſe it as a man in a journey doth an inn, for his preſent accommodation and refreſhment, but not to abide there. Heaven ſhould be the place to which all our thoughts and ſtudies ſhould tend, where all our deſigns and purſuits ſhould be directed. And whatever becomes of us here, whether our lot is poverty or riches, health or ſickneſs, a ſplendid fortune, or low and mean circumſtances, it ſhould be indifferent to us, ſo as we get but to heaven at laſt. Let us conſider, that though we are allowed by our gracious God to make uſe of all things here, that tend to make our abode tolerably eaſy and comfortable; yet heaven is our home; that is the country we are in purſuit of, and for the ſake of which we profeſs to be Chriſt's diſciples. "That is "the prize of our high calling in Chriſt Je-"ſus." Would we therefore walk ſuitably to our Chriſtian vocation, let us mind that. Let us live like men of another world. Let God, heaven, and the things above, have our hearts, our deſires, our affections, while this world hath our bodies. By this means we ſhall not only ſecure to ourſelves this everlaſting, never-fading inheritance, which is the end of our faith, and the hope of our calling; but we ſhall al-

ſo make the beſt proviſion poſſible for a happy life, even in this world; for Chriſt has ſolemnly promiſed us, that if we "firſt ſeek the "kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, all "the other things we need ſhall be added "unto us."

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe CVIII. Bp. *Moore.*

Of perfecting HOLINESS in the FEAR of GOD.

2 Cor. vii. 1.

Having therefore theſe promiſes, dearly beloved, let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.

ST. Paul, to ſupport his apoſtolical power, and to ſuppreſs and extirpate ſome very malignant and dangerous opinions that then prevailed, which were likely to ſubvert the church he had lately planted, writes this and the former epiſtle to the Corinthians, full of affection, wiſdom and piety. And it is obſervable, that at the ſame time he requires us to believe the myſteries of the goſpel, he commands us to pay obedience to all its laws, joining a good life with faith in Chriſt. Our faith without charity will prove ineffectual; becauſe an increaſe in divine knowledge obliges us to abound in works of charity, purity and holineſs. In ſome verſes before the text, the apoſtle exhorts them to leave the company of unbelievers and idolaters; becauſe they were become the temple of the living God. He thought it neither ſafe nor ſuitable, for his new converts, who had renounced their vain and impious opinions, and reformed their ſcandalous manners, ſtill to converſe with thoſe, who retained their groſs errors, and continued in the practice of their old ſins. He could no way approve of their aſſociating with idolaters, when they had with ſo much

much reaſon refuſed to worſhip falſe Gods; nor hear the profane talk, or behold the immodeſt behaviour of the unbelieving. Having therefore, ſays he, theſe moſt ineſtimable promiſes, that God will make us temples for himſelf to dwell in; that he will be our father, and we ſhall be his children; let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, from the ſins we have been guilty of, in our hearts, wills and bodies; growing more perfect by the divine aſſiſtance, in the practice of all the Chriſtian graces and duties of holineſs, out of a deep and ſincere fear and reverence of God.

It may be obſerved, that the apoſtle here ſuppoſes the Corinthians to be in a holy ſtate and condition; and he exhorts them ſtill to endeavour after greater perfection. They muſt abound in every good work, and grow in grace; not only add one virtue to another till all are attained, but to improve in every ſingle virtue. To entitle us to a right to this holy ſtate, we muſt believe that God is; that we receive our beings, ſouls, and bodies from him; that we are preſerved by his providence, ſubſiſt by his bounty, and that he beſtows on us all things neceſſary for our life, or to promote our happineſs. And when the faculties and powers of our nature, had been corrupted and impaired by the tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents, God ſent his only ſon Jeſus Chriſt, to lay down his life to ſave ours; and by the ineſtimable merit of his death and paſſion, to procure the pardon of God for our ſins, and to reſtore us to his favour. Wherefore we who have been reſcued from the guilt, the dominion, and puniſhment of our ſins, by the effuſion of the blood of Chriſt, are under the higheſt obligations to pay an entire obedience to the author of our beings, and to the redeemer of our forfeited lives. So that if we are true members of this holy ſtate; the love

and

and fear of God, and of his ſon Jeſus Chriſt, will be the governing principle of our hearts, and have a powerful influence over all our actions, to promote his glory, and preſerve our intereſt in his favour. The neceſſary conditions then of a holy life are, that we diligently and carefully inſtruct ourſelves in all the duties of it; and that we faithfully and ſincerely practiſe what we find to be our duty, and make what proficiency we can therein.

But to render this diſcourſe the more inſtructive, it may not be amiſs to reflect on ſome errors, into which perſons have fallen with reſpect to this ſtate of holineſs. As ſome have preſumed their ſouls to be in a ſafe condition without any true grounds, ſo others have deſpaired of God's favour, without any juſt reaſon; I will therefore mention ſome ſorts of perſons, who have no pretence to the favour and mercy of God, or but very little; whoſe caſe is very doubtful and dangerous. And they can never pretend any claim to a holy ſtate of life, who have no holineſs at all. Such are thoſe who openly profeſs infidelity, who reject and deſpiſe both religion and virtue; who raſhly and without conſideration, reaſon, or proof, ſay in their heart, there is no God; who would have it ſuppoſed, that the heavens and the earth, the effects of infinite wiſdom, were produced, and do ſtill continue, merely by chance or fate; without any wiſe mind or being, to govern and direct them. That they themſelves are under a fatal neceſſity; although they have the certain experience of their own liberty. And with regard to ſpiritual things, they are ſo ſtupid and ſenſeleſs, as to think prayers, praiſes, and other parts of divine worſhip, to be ſo unprofitable, that they neither deſire, nor would be thankful for the mercy and favour of God. But rather chuſe to give themſelves up to all ungodlineſs and uncleanneſs; not only to make a mock

mock at ſin, but to commit it with greedineſs; and to uſe the very breath we receive from God, to blaſpheme and defy him. Again,

They, who, though they do not publickly declare for atheiſm and infidelity, yet having no true religion at the bottom; ſuch as theſe can have no right to this holy ſtate. Their religious profeſſion does not proceed from the ſincere love of God, but from their worldly intereſt. They do not live according to the rules of the goſpel, but only make a ſhew of doing ſo, thereby to gain reputation among men, and advance their ſecular intereſt. They may draw near to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are removed far from him. Nor can they either be ſecure of being in God's favour, who having honeſt and good intentions, are yet frequently overcome by temptations; the ſenſual appetite generally prevailing over their holy and good inclinations. For can we ſeriouſly think God will accept of our repentance, when at the next temptation and opportunity, we again commit the ſame crime. If ſin has dominion over us, it will be impoſſible that our ſouls ſhould be a ſuitable dwelling, for God's holy ſpirit to inhabit; and yet God requires no more of us, than he enables us to perform. If we heartily pray for the divine aſſiſtance, if we carefully watch to avoid all occaſions of ſin, ſincerely and reſolutely oppoſe temptations, we ſhall be able to mortify and ſubdue all fleſhly luſts and vile affections.

Laſtly, there is no ground to encourage men to think their ſpiritual condition is good and acceptable to God, who cuſtomarily allow themſelves, to commit any one heinous ſin. There are many ſins of ſo malignant a nature, that God has declared he will exclude thoſe who habitually practiſe them, from the kingdom of heaven. I do not mean,

when

when men are in a great paſſion, or ſuddenly ſurprized; but the habit of any deadly ſin. The malicious invention of a falſhood, to ſpoil a man's good name; a deliberate perjury, to rob him of his eſtate; to plot and compaſs in cold blood the murder of our neighbour; any of theſe ſins are ſo heinous as to forfeit the intereſt we had in God's favour. For if we will pleaſe God, we muſt render to him, not only ſincere, but equal and univerſal obedience to all his laws; ſo that all who commit ſin with reluctancy of conſcience, and reflect upon their paſt folly with grief and tears, but yet do afterwards relapſe into the ſame ſins again; though of ſuch it may be ſaid, that they are the beſt among bad men, and that there are hopes of them, yet they are not arrived to that goodneſs God requires.

By the conſtant practice of piety, all the actions and duties of religion will be more eaſy to be performed, and rendered more pleaſant and delightful to us. For humbly and earneſtly to beg of God the pardon of our ſins, who alone can forgive them; and that he would enable us to live innocently and to die peaceably, who has the power of life and death in his hands. To teſtify the ſincere gratitude of our ſouls, by magnifying the power, admiring the wiſdom, and adoring the goodneſs of God; our beſt friend, our greateſt benefactor, and our moſt compaſſionate father. To do all the good, and ſhew all the mercy we can to our neighbours; to preſerve purity, patience, and contentment in our ſouls; holineſs and righteouſneſs in our whole converſation; are deeds which carry with them quiet and ſatisfaction of mind, and leave behind them fountains of pleaſures and joys forever flowing.

The eaſe and delight which ariſes from an habitual courſe of piety and virtue, are the moſt powerful

erful motives for our perſevering in a godly life to the end; and the greateſt ſecurity againſt relapſing into our former wickedneſs. When a long cuſtom of holy living has vanquiſhed all the difficulties which attend the beginning of it, and the remembrance of a man's good works makes conſcience ſerene and joyful; the heavenly virtues he has acquired, will be as ſo many guards and preſervatives againſt his falling into ſin. His humility will ſecure him from preſuming too much on his own ſtrength. His experience of God's help and favour in former troubles, will make him reſiſt the allurements of unlawful pleaſures; and patiently to bear any afflictions, rather than comply with what is evil. The ſenſe of religion and humanity deeply rooted in his mind, will oblige him in his whole conduct, to have a regard to truth, juſtice, equity and compaſſion. The benignity of his nature will conſtantly diſpoſe him to put the faireſt and beſt conſtructions on mens actions; to excuſe if not commend them, ſo far as is conſiſtent with truth and their good. And as he never can flatter or encourage men in great faults, ſo neither will he moroſely cenſure their little infirmities. But,

It may be now proper to endeavour the removing of ſome ſcruples that perplex ſome honeſt perſons minds, and cauſe them to doubt, whether they be in the favour of God; and which makes them deſpair of arriving to ſuch degrees of perfection, as will fit and qualify them for the kingdom of heaven. They think that if they ſtood right with their God, they ſhould be more ſenſible of their ſpiritual improvements, and find greater peace, ſerenity and joy, upon the performance of their religious duties. To this I anſwer; that the want of delight in God's ſervice, ſometimes proceeds from the indiſpoſition of the body, and not the fault of the mind. And

God

God will no more puniſh men for bodily indiſpoſition, which they cannot help, than for malignant diſeaſes, which they can neither prevent nor cure. Beſides, providence may permit holy men to be thus troubled, for the exerciſe of their faith, the tryal of their patience, and the encreaſe of their truſt in God; who will at laſt amply reward their godlineſs and probity. Let us but continue ſtedfaſt in the practice of our duty, and tho' at preſent it may not be ſo delightful to us, yet we need not doubt of the love of God, nor of our progreſs towards heaven. By the conſtant uſe of fervent prayers and pious meditations, we ſhall grow ſtronger and firmer in faith and charity; tho' we may not ſometimes ſo ſenſibly feel and diſcern it. For tho' we are ſure that plants and vegetables grow, yet it is not perceptible to our ſenſes.

Others object, that they deſpond of arriving to ſuch a pitch of virtue, as is related of ſome good people. And that they obſerve in ſcripture, that an unſinning obedience is made the terms of everlaſting life; for our Saviour commands us to "be "perfect, as our father which is in heaven is per-"fect;" who is infinitely good and perfect. To the firſt difficulty, I anſwer; that tho' they may never riſe to ſuch a height of virtue as many others have done, yet their ſouls may be in a ſafe condition. Becauſe there will be different degrees of honour in the celeſtial manſions; "one ſtar will "ſhine above another ſtar in glory." And they who ſhall not ſit on the right hand of God, may yet be admitted to a leſs degree of honour. The failings of Noah, David, Hezekiah, St. Peter, and other eminent ſaints, who loved and ſerved God with all their powers, are recorded in ſcripture, as a caution to the beſt men, not to be too ſecure; and as an encouragement to the weak and feeble, but ſincere worſhippers of God, not to deſpair.

But

But then bold and preſumptuous ſinners muſt not from hence think to offend heaven without danger. For tho' God will not "quench the ſmoak-"ing flax, nor break the bruiſed reed;" that is, he will not diſcourage nor reject the leaſt degrees of ſincerity; yet he will ſmite hardened and profane criminals with a rod of iron. There will be no pity nor commiſeration left for thoſe who defy almighty power, and deſpiſe immenſe goodneſs, without a very deep and unfeigned repentance.

As to thoſe paſſages of ſcripture, which ſeem to make unſinning obedience the condition of obtaining everlaſting life, it muſt be obſerved, that there are other places in the ſame inſpired writers, which ſoften and qualify the rigour of divine juſtice, that ſeems to be contained in them, and by which they ought to be interpreted and explained. Thus St. James affirms, "that whoſoever keepeth the "whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, is "guilty of all;" he alſo ſays, that in many things we offend all; and exhorts Chriſtians, to confeſs their faults one to another. And St. John, who aſſures us that "he who committeth ſin is of the "devil; and that whoſoever is born of God, doth "not commit ſin;" he likewiſe declares, that "if we ſay we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, "and the truth is not in us." But we muſt never put ſuch a ſenſe upon any paſſage of ſcripture as is repugnant to the truth of God, contained in the ſcripture; nor fix ſuch an interpretation on the inſpired writers, as to make them contradict themſelves; nor yet admit of any expoſition, that puts men upon a level with our bleſſed Lord, who was free from ſin, without ſpot or blemiſh. I will now proceed to ſhew how, and in what manner, we may beſt promote our improvement and growth in grace. And firſt,

"Let

" Let us endeavour to obtain a meek and humble frame of ſpirit: In order to this, let us take a true value and eſtimation of ourſelves, which is the proper and genuine notion of humanity. We muſt conſider our wants and imperfections; what weakneſſes we are guilty of, what graces we want, and how much we ſtand in need of the divine aſſiſtance, to enable us to do our duty. Let us give a conſtant attendance to the offices of religion, both public and private: for theſe are the means appointed by God, to convey grace to men. There is a wonderful efficacy which attends the right performance of the duties of religion. For he who does this conſtantly and conſcientiouſly, cannot poſſibly be habitually wicked. And tho' the words which are read and preached unto us are the words of frail men, yet they are alſo the meſſage and goſpel of the great God of heaven and earth, the judge of all; and whoſoever carefully attends to, and treaſures it up in their hearts, will not depart without a bleſſing.

" We muſt alſo look frequently into the ſtate and condition of our ſouls; and ſet apart ſome certain times daily or weekly to examine ourſelves, and ſee what advances we have made in the ways of religion and holineſs; what ſins we have been guilty of, whether we grow better or worſe; and we are further to conſider, that the concerns of our ſouls are our trueſt intereſt, and of the neareſt importance to us, and upon the right care of which our eternal happineſs depends. And therefore the knowledge of ourſelves is what we ſhould be moſt ſolicitous about. I am perſuaded if theſe plain and eaſy rules were carefully and conſcientiouſly practiſed, they would have a very great influence on our lives and converſations. To which I add, that we ſhould entertain and cheriſh the motions of God's holy ſpirit, when we find any good

thoughts ſpring up in our minds, we ſhould impreſs them on our memories, improve them by meditation, and tranſcribe them into our actions. We have daily new vices to mortify, virtuous diſpoſitions to exerciſe and cultivate, temptations to reſiſt, afflictions to encounter; and all theſe require the aſſiſtance of God's grace, and which is never wanting to thoſe who aſk it with faith, and employ it with diligence.

To direct us how we may know what our growth and proficiency in grace is, let us examine, whether our hatred againſt ſin, and love to religion be encreaſed? Whether we are more zealous and affectionate in our devotions? Whether our paſſions are reduced to better order? Whether we can bear afflictions more patiently, and reſiſt temptations more courageouſly? And whether we go forward or backward in the paths of virtue and holineſs? To know this, let us but ſatisfy ourſelves whether we yield a more ready ſincere obedience to the laws of God? Whether we perform our duty with more pleaſure and delight than we have formerly done? Whether we bear a greater reſpect to all God's commands? And if ſo, then we may conclude, that we grow in grace, and that our ſouls are in a ſafe condition. This is the rule our Saviour laid down, to try our love to God. "If "ye love me, ſays he, keep my commandments." If we try our love to God, or our growth in grace by other marks, we may be eaſily miſtaken. For we may take the form for the power of godlineſs. We may be very zealous in the devotional parts of religion, and very remiſs in the practical. And therefore the beſt way to make a true judgment of our growth in grace, is to conſider whether our virtuous habits grow ſtronger? Whether our ſobriety, juſtice and charity are more apparently evident to ourſelves and others? Whether we are more

more desirous to do all the good we can; more ready to forgive injuries; more inclined to love our enemies; more exact and punctual in our dealings; more conscientious in the discharge of our several and respective duties; more sober and temperate in the government of ourselves? These are sure and certain signs by which we may be satisfied, whether we grow in grace, and are influenced by the principles of a lively and vital religion; "he "that doth righteousness is righteous." This means an habitual, and not only one act of righteousness; for a wicked man may do some brave and good actions, from a principle of generosity; and yet may have neither religion nor grace in his soul.

But we must not expect that even in good men, every religious act should exceed those they have before performed. Or, that our proficiency in grace should be so speedy, as to be discerned in every act, in every single instance of duty. No; our improvement in goodness proceeds by slow steps and insensible degrees; like the shade on a dial, which is always in motion, tho' not presently visible to the eye. A good man has not at all times the same disposition of mind, nor temper of body; nor can he be always equally intent upon the performance of his duty. We must therefore have regard to the general course and tenor of our lives, and consider more particularly our improvement in those graces we have had occasion to exercise; and if we carefully and truly make this enquiry, we shall soon discover the condition of our souls, and whether we grow in grace or not. Let us then proceed from one degree of grace to another. Let us improve in all manner of Christian virtues and habits, and demonstrate the reality of our growth in grace, by a good life and conversation; like a good tree which bringeth forth fair and great plenty of fruit. Let us not make a bare profession of religion, but pro-

ceed to abound more and more, in every good work; daily growing more pious towards God, more careful in governing ourſelves, and more charitable towards our neighbour. "For he who doth "not love his neighbour whom he hath ſeen, "how ſhould he love God, whom he hath not "ſeen?"

It may be of good uſe to recommend to you ſome method and order in your whole conduct; and this conſiſts in alloting proper and ſuitable ſeaſons, both for the exerciſe of devotion, and managing the affairs of this world. This will much contribute to guard us againſt temptations to ſin, and hinder us from omitting the great duties of religion. Let ſincerity, integrity and perſeverance in our duty, at all times influence us to perfect holineſs in the fear of God. Let the fear, reverence and love of God, not the oſtentation, or praiſe of men, prevail on us to perſevere in the practice of true religion. Let our obedience be entire, and equally extend to all the divine precepts. Let neither riches, honours, ſenſual pleaſures, nor the evil cuſtoms of the world, tempt us to think that any of God's commands are ſmall and inconſiderable, or entice us wilfully to tranſgreſs any of them. Let us be conſtantly proceeding and advancing higher in our Chriſtian ſtate; for religion and virtue conſiſts in action, and we ought to be preſſing forward to obtain the prize. But if we hide our talents and do not improve them; if we go backward, or do but ſtand ſtill; our holy diſpoſitions will relent, decay and wither; and poſſibly before we can recover ourſelves, the door may be ſhut, and we find no entrance.——May it therefore be our great and conſtant work to ſubdue and extirpate pride, vanity, malice, anger and luſt, on this ſide the grave. May all ſins die in us, before we come to die ourſelves; and may our ſouls, having vanquiſhed their deadly

deadly enemies, ſupported on the wings of faith and charity, aſcend to the glorious regions above. May we add "to our faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godlineſs; and to godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kindneſs, charity." So that theſe graces and virtues may forever flouriſh and abound in us.

Diſcourſe CIX. Bp. *Atterbury.*

Of walking CIRCUMSPECTLY, REDEEMING the TIME.

Epheſ. v. 15, 16.

—Walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe; redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.

THE Epheſians being ſurrounded with enemies on all ſides, and greatly tempted to apoſtatiſe from the Chriſtian religion; the apoſtle exhorts them to be exceeding cautious in their words and actions, and to behave with ſo much prudence and circumſpection, that they might neither wilfully expoſe themſelves to thoſe dangers and perſecutions which threatened them; nor yet give occaſion of offence to their brethren, by any ſcandalous compliances, either in matters of faith or practice. "See then that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, "but as wiſe." And what was ſaid to them is applicable to all Chriſtians. The true meaning of which is; that we take great care to live up to the rules of piety and devotion, juſtice and honeſty, temperance and ſobriety. That we perform our duty to God, our neighbour and ourſelves, with that diligence, circumſpection, and exactneſs, as becomes men who are fully perſuaded of the truth of that religion which they profeſs; and the certainty of thoſe rewards, which they expect hereafter. That we recommend Chriſtianity to others,

thers, in a looſe and atheiſtical age, not only by making an open and reſolute profeſſion of its faith, but by tranſcribing its precepts into our lives and converſations: by demonſtrating to the world, that religion and virtue, notwithſtanding the degeneracy of mankind, and the almoſt univerſal corruption of manners, are more than bare names, having ſtill a real exiſtence in the world; and alſo by repreſenting the beauty of holineſs, the charms of a good and virtuous life, the wonderful pleaſure and delight of a quiet and contented mind, and the mixed joy and ſatisfaction, which proceeds from a conſcience void of offence; and by endeavouring all we poſſibly can, to allure others to the practice of religion.

This is a brave and generous deſign, agreeable to the ſpirit of true Chriſtianity, being a ſpark of that heavenly zeal, which inſpired the breaſts of its firſt profeſſors; and which would make more laſting impreſſions on mens minds, and more proſelytes to our religion, than all thoſe numerous volumes of controverſy, which have ſo much diſturbed the church's peace. A profane and ſubtile wit will never want nice diſtinctions to evade the force of the moſt ſolid arguments; nor yet art to colour over the moſt abſurd opinions, with appearances of reaſon. But when he obſerves the exact purity and holineſs of the devout Chriſtian, his heroic courage and magnanimity, his entire reſignation to the will of God, and his fervent zeal and devotion; theſe are ſuch prevailing arguments, as will not only allure the affections, but convince the judgment; and make men acknowledge, that ſuch excellent effects muſt proceed from a divine and ſupernatural cauſe. This is that exact and circumſpect walking recommended by the apoſtle; that demonſtration of the ſpirit, which never fails to produce ſuitable affec-

tions in the minds of thoſe who attend to it.——— We muſt alſo live up to the rules of prudence and diſcretion. Our behaviour ought not to be moroſe and auſtere. Nor ſhould we indulge ourſelves in thoſe ſenſual pleaſures and enjoyments, which are lawful; but we ought to make ſuch a prudent and diſcreet uſe of our Chriſtian liberty, as may render ourſelves eaſy and agreeable to ourſelves and others: and let all men ſee, that we know how to enjoy the pleaſures and good things of this world, and yet to have our affections fixed on the more ſolid and durable delights of heaven; and enjoy thoſe "pleaſures which are at God's right "hand for evermore."

The great art of a Chriſtian is to know how to want, and how to abound. To manage diſcreetly a proſperous or adverſe condition. To conduct himſelf in all the various changes and chances of his life; not only with honeſty and integrity, but with ſuch prudence, moderation, and temper, as may recommend religion to others, and render it lovely and amiable in the ſight of all men. For how many good and honeſt men are there, who would not willingly do any unjuſt or wicked thing; and yet by an indiſcreet behaviour they give offence to ſuch as cannot diſtinguiſh between the virtues of the Chriſtian, and the weakneſs and frailty of the man; and ſo bring an evil report upon the ways of virtue and holineſs? They are either too ſtrict and exact in ſome circumſtantials, indifferent in their own nature; too ſtiff and reſerved in converſation, and ſo repreſent religion as a melancholy courſe of life, which deprives us of all reaſonable gratifications of our ſenſes; or elſe they run into the contrary extreme, and indulge themſelves in all manner of ſenſual enjoyments; by which they are expoſed to ſuch violent temptations, as very much hazard their integrity,

integrity, and tend to enſnare other men; who are hereby encouraged to take ſuch liberties and licentious courſes, as are utterly inconſiſtent with a Chriſtian life. We ſhould therefore have a watchful eye and a particular regard to thoſe temptations, to which we are moſt expoſed. We muſt endeavour by all lawful and prudent means, if poſſible, to prevent falling to any dangerous temptations. A Chriſtian ſhould therefore conſider what ſins he is moſt inclined to, by conſtitution, education, or cuſtom; which are his darling and boſom ſins; and to ſtrive to ſubdue theſe, and to avoid all occaſions leading to the commiſſion of them. It is no great commendation to be good, when we are not tempted to be otherwiſe. But to reſiſt the allurements of vice, to be temperate at a plentiful table; to be chaſte when ſolicited by a proſtitute beauty; to be zealous and devout in a profane and atheiſtical age; theſe are ſuch inſtances of true virtue, as can only proceed from that wiſdom which is divine. Laſtly,

Walking circumſpectly imports the abſtaining from all appearance of evil. We muſt not allow ourſelves in any thought, word, or act diſpleaſing to God; or that may give juſt occaſion of ſcandal and offence to our neighbour. We muſt endeavour to ſerve God in every inſtance of duty, thro' the whole courſe of our lives; and not allow ourſelves in the breach of any one of his laws. We are not to enquire what is the loweſt degree of virtue and holineſs, and to be only juſt ſo good as to bring us to heaven; but we muſt labour to perform exactly all parts of our duty; and to the utmoſt of our power and ability to ſerve God, at all times and in all places. It is our duty to ſtrive continually to grow in grace, to improve in virtuous habits, and to come as near to perfection in this world as is poſſible. We muſt every day grow more devout towards

wards God, more kind and beneficent to our neighbours, more prudent and diſcreet in all our words and actions; that ſo we may be the better prepared for a future ſtate of glory and immortality. This is the moſt noble and higheſt attainment of a Chriſtian; and is a work of great care and difficulty. Indeed, there is no undertaking of any great moment, that can be accompliſhed without a ſerious attention of thought, and much pains and diligence. But tho' there is ſome difficulty in working out our ſalvation, yet God has not left us without ſtrength to perform what he expects; for he will afford us the aſſiſtance of his grace to proſper our endeavours, and render them effectual. I will now propoſe ſome conſiderations, which may be of uſe, to engage us to walk circumſpectly, and to lead a life the moſt exact and perfect. And

Let us conſider, that what God has made to be our duty, is the trueſt perfection of our natures. The end of God's creating the world was to communicate happineſs to his creatures. He therefore gave ſuch laws as were moſt ſuitable and convenient to their natures; ſuch as had a rational tendency to promote their happineſs. They were not the arbitrary dictates of his will, nor deſigned merely to ſhew his power and dominion; but they were ſuch as demonſtrated God's infinite juſtice and goodneſs, as well as his power; and ſuch as diſpoſed and qualified men for that glory and happineſs, which he propoſed as the reward of their obedience. Thus the deſign of the laws of the goſpel, is to reduce men, as near as poſſible, to that rational and perfect way of living, they were placed in before the fall; to improve their rational faculties in diſcovering the moſt ſublime and excellent truths; to mortify and ſubdue their paſſions, bring them under the dominion of reaſon; by taking their affections off from admiring and doting upon ſenſual enjoyments,

ments, and placing them on things above; by teaching men to place their chief happineſs in the contemplation of God, the fountain of all good; by adoring his excellencies, perfections and wonderful works, and obſerving his laws, which are the tranſcripts of his original goodneſs, juſtice and holineſs. Such a life as this muſt indeed at firſt be attended with much difficulty, till our evil habits are rooted out; and then it will grow every day more eaſy and grateful, and we ſhall at laſt take pleaſure and delight in the performance of our duty. Again:

Let us conſider, that God has made a clear diſcovery of his will by the goſpel, the laws and precepts of which are ſo excellent, that they tend very much to render our duty more eaſy, and to aſſiſt us in the practice of it. The precepts governing the firſt motions of our ſouls; of ſtifling anger and revenge in the birth; of overcoming evil with good; of not coveting the proſperity of our neighbour; of not indulging ſo much as a laſcivious look, but of making a covenant with our eyes, and avoiding all appearance of evil; all theſe are ſuch excellent injunctions as ſurpaſs the conſtitutions and ſanctions of all other law-makers. Hence we have good reaſon to conclude, that God expects we ſhould bring forth the fruits of a holy life, in proportion to the light that is afforded us. And he has given us the perfect example of our bleſſed Lord, who by a holy life demonſtrated the poſſibility of our performing what he requires. We have beſides, the promiſe of God's holy ſpirit to help our infirmities, and enable us to do our duty. And as we have under the goſpel the more plentiful effuſions of God's grace, therefore we ſhall be inexcuſable, if we receive this grace in vain, or abuſe it to wantonneſs; if we do not employ our talent to attain a higher pitch of holineſs and virtue. For

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God will call us to an account for all our thoughts, words and actions; and this conſideration alone, if heartily believed and ſeriouſly regarded, muſt needs have a wonderful influence upon us. For how circumſpectly ſhould we behave, could we behold the viſible preſence of God, looking down from heaven, to obſerve all our actions? But how much more careful and exact ought we to be in all our actions, and to caſt out of our minds every vain and wicked thought; when we are aſſured that God not only views our actions, but knows even the moſt ſecret thoughts of our heart? That at the great day of accounts they will be all written in legible characters, and expoſed to the view of men and angels? Who can expreſs the horror and confuſion, that will attend the ſinner, when his private ſins ſhall be publiſhed openly, and the ſecrets of his heart reveal'd? For tho' he might conceal his ſins from men, yet they cannot eſcape the all-ſeeing eye of God.

Let us alſo conſider, that our future rewards will be in proportion to our holineſs in this life. As one ſtar differs from another in glory, ſo ſhall we in heaven; according to thoſe degrees of perfection, which we have here attained, will be our happineſs hereafter. How earneſtly then ought we to ſtrive to exceed each other in virtue and holineſs; to improve our graces, to be fruitful and abound in all good works, ſince we ſhall hereby obtain higher degrees of glory; How carefully ſhould we avoid every idle word, every unſeemly thought, every evil way; ſince every ſin we commit will deprive us of ſome part of our future happineſs; of thoſe ineſtimable treaſures, which will be the reward of thoſe who ſerve God? A felicity too great to be underſtood by us in this life, too excellent to be comprehended, while we are in theſe earthly tabernacles; for neither eye hath ſeen, nor ear heard,

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nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the happineſs which God hath prepared for them that love him.—I will now lay down ſome rules to direct us in the government of our lives and converſations.

And we ſhould enter upon no buſineſs of moment, without conſideration. This duty is frequently recommended to us, in the holy ſcriptures; for did men ſeriouſly think on their ways, they would have reſpect unto all God's commandments. Men are ſo taken up with the affairs of this world, that they will not give themſelves time or leiſure to weigh impartially and deliberately the truths which are propoſed to them, and the powerful motives to engage the practice of them. Serious conſideration is a good beginning, and will conduce much to the better regulation of our lives. It is abſolutely neceſſary, to a conſcientious diſcharge of our duty, that we duly conſider the conſequences of every important action we perform. For into how many indiſcretions, ſins, and follies, doth inconſideration betray men? Let us therefore uſe our utmoſt endeavours to inform our conſciences, as to what is our duty; and be careful not to act contrary to the dictates of them. We ſhould alſo frequently look back upon our paſt actions, and recollect what we have done; that we may know the true ſtate and condition of our ſouls, and how we ſtand with God? And whether we are prepared to give up our accounts with comfort, at the great tribunal? This rule, if duly and conſcientiouſly practiſed, would be of excellent uſe to us. Let us begin and end all actions with fervent prayers to God, that he would enlighten and inform our underſtandings in the truth; teach us our duty, and enable us by his grace to perform it. Prayer to God is the moſt effectual means to incline him to give us his help and aſſiſtance; and to beget in our ſouls the graces

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we pray for. I now proceed to the other part of the text, to "redeem the time, becauſe the days "are evil."

Time is properly ſaid to be redeemed, when we improve all opportunities to advance God's glory, the good of our neighbour, and the welfare of our own ſouls. When we ſuffer not a moment to be loſt, by ſloth, intemperance, or worldly care. Our time is a talent which God has intruſted us with, to the end that we ſhould give him an exact account of it. And tho' he is a loving and indulgent father, to thoſe who obey him and keep his commandments; yet he is a ſevere and a juſt judge, towards thoſe who offend and break his laws. Was this world our home, and we were not to be called to an account for what we do hear; we might then gratify and pleaſe our fancies, and ſpend our time in ſenſual ſatisfactions. But ſince this life, this ſmall ſpan of time, is alloted us to provide for eternity, it much concerns us to make a right uſe of it; and not to ſpend it in heaping up riches, in purſuing after honours and preferments, or indulging ourſelves in pleaſure and voluptuouſneſs. Alas! our time was intruſted with us not to ſpend in ſin and vanity; but in laying up our treaſure in heaven, in ſeeking after an immortal crown, and obtaining thoſe pleaſures which are at God's right hand for evermore.

Our time in this life is ſhort, if we conſider the buſineſs we have to do, or in compariſon of eternity. The buſineſs of ſalvation is a work of difficulty, and requires more time than we generally imagine. The ſubduing our luſts, the breaking off vicious habits, and introducing virtuous ones, will require our utmoſt care and diligence: and therefore we are commanded to "work out our ſalvation with fear "and trembling; to ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait "gate; to give diligence to make our calling and

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" election ſure." Words which imply the difficulty of the taſk. Our time is alſo ſhort in reſpect of eternity: for what is threeſcore and ten years, if compared with a duration that will never end? But then how many are cut off in the flower of their youth, and never reach to that age? Beſides, what allowances muſt we make for eating, drinking and ſleeping; for the buſineſs and pleaſures of life? I may add alſo, for our ſins, which have no ſmall ſhare. And when all theſe are deducted, how little portion, how few moments of our lives remain to ſerve God, and make proviſion for our eternal welfare? And as time is ſhort, ſo is it uncertain. We know not when we may be called away; whether at the firſt or ſecond watch of the night. We are only maſters of the preſent moment, and cannot promiſe ourſelves a longer duration. Our bodies are ſubject to ſo many diſeaſes and accidents, that this night our ſouls may be required of us. And when once the preſent time is paſt, it can never be recalled.

So that upon redeeming our time, the everlaſting welfare of our ſouls and bodies depends. And if we do not improve our time in this life, we ſhall be miſerable to all eternity. Who then that believes he has an immortal ſoul, and ſeriouſly conſiders what eternity means, would venture to trifle away time, which ſo nearly concerns him? And yet we find by experience, that too many are guilty of it. When we come to die, we would give all the world was it ours, for a little of that time we ſo negligently ſquander away. We ſhall then wiſh we had ſpent that time in doing good, in praying, hearing, reading and meditating on God's word; which we have trifled away for things of no moment. Then all the gaudy ſcenes of this world will vaniſh, earthly enjoyments will appear in their proper light; and nothing will afford us true comfort

fort and ſatisfaction, but the reflections of a well ſpent life, and thoſe few hours we have employed in the duties of religion. The time we have waſted in heaping up riches, in purſuing honours and pleaſures, will but add to our grief and torment. So that ſhould ſickneſs and death take us unprovided, how ſad a condition ſhall we be in! It will be the greateſt torment in hell for men to reflect upon their folly, in neglecting thoſe opportunities God has given them to provide for their ſouls. It will ſting them to the heart to think that they have loſt heaven and eternal happineſs, for the enjoyment of the pleaſures of this world, which afforded them ſo little ſatisfaction. They will then lament that they choſe to ſpend their time in any employment or diverſion, rather than in the duties of religion; and preferred the fleeting amuſements of this world, before the ſolid durable comforts of a holy life.

Another reaſon why we ſhould be careful to redeem time is, becauſe the days are evil. The times we live in are ſo wicked and debauched, that it is very difficult to reſiſt the temptations we meet with. We have ſome among us who are not ſatisfied with leading wicked lives themſelves, but make it their buſineſs to tempt others to ſin. The glory of theſe men is, to enſnare the temperate into a debauch, to put the modeſt man out of countenance, to ridicule ſobriety and religion. We live in the dregs of time, in the worſt age of the world, when the generality of men ſeem to have caſt off all fear of God and ſenſe of religion; and to have given themſelves up to the gratification of their ſenſual appetites and deſires. So that it is very difficult to avoid the manifeſt temptations to vice and luxury, which continually ſurround us. But as this life is a ſtate of warfare, we muſt be conſtantly upon our guard, and be prepared to reſiſt them.

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We must be sober and vigilant, that we may be able to repel all the fiery darts of the devil and his emissaries. And that we may the better perform this duty, it will be proper for us to observe the following directions.

Let our thoughts be always employed about some lawful business, that the devil may not find us idle. For whilst the husbandman slept, the evil one came, and sowed the tares. Let us not spend our time in what does not concern us; but employ it in the most necessary work. We must first attend the worship of God, the duties of religion, and the concerns of our souls, before we make provision for the body. If we first "seek the kingdom "of God and his righteousness, all other things "will be added unto us." Let us not spend too much time, even in lawful recreation; sports and amusing conversation are apt to engross our affections and time; and by introducing habits of sloth and ease, unfit us for business of more importance. Let us frequently meditate on death, judgment, heaven and hell; and imagine we hear the trumpet sounding, and the voice of the archangel proclaming, arise ye dead, and come to judgment. A due and constant practice of these few rules would have a happy influence on our lives and conversations; it would imprint on our minds such an awe of the supreme being, as to engage us to an universal obedience to the laws of God, and a diligent redeeming of the time for the future.

But some will say, that they have not time for the duties of religion, having large families to provide for; and that their laborious callings take up most of their time and thought, to get things necessary for the support of life. To these I answer, that the business of our calling is an act of religion; and God is as well pleased with a man who is honestly discharging his duty, in the station he has

placed him in; as if he was continually upon his knees offering up prayers to heaven. But no man is ſo engaged in buſineſs, as not to find ſome time in every day to perform his devotions; even in the field, or in the ſhop, he may lift up his heart to heaven, in ſervent and pious ejaculations; to acknowledge God's goodneſs, and beg ſupplies for his neceſſities. Beſides, there is one day in ſeven ſet apart on purpoſe for the duties of religion; when men have nothing to do but to worſhip God, and take care of their immortal ſouls. And how inexcuſable ſhall we be, if we neglect thoſe opportunities of ſerving God?

Let all of us then ſet about the practice of this abſolutely neceſſary duty. And if for the time paſt we have walked according to the courſe of this world, and have had our converſation in the luſts of our fleſh; let it be our chief care and buſineſs for the future, to make our calling and election ſure. To trim our lamps with the oil of good works, and furniſh ourſelves with the wedding garments; and ſo to employ the talents God has intruſted us with, that after we have given up our accounts, we may have that comfortable ſentence pronounced unto us; Well done, thou good and "faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy "Lord."

Diſcourſe CX. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

The FAITH of ABRAHAM, in offering ISAAC.

Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Iſaac; and he that had received the promiſes offered up his only begotten ſon: of whom it was ſaid, that in Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called: accounting that God was able to raiſe him up, even from the dead; from whence alſo he received him in a figure.

FROM theſe words I propoſe to conſider the example of Abraham, the conſtancy of whoſe faith and chearful obedience, even in the moſt difficult caſes, is remarkable above all others. For, at God's command he left his kindred and country, not knowing whither he ſhould go; by which eminent act of obedience, he declared himſelf wholly at God's diſpoſal and ready to follow him. But this trial was not to be compared with the command of God in the text, to offer up his only ſon; and yet ſuch was the immutable ſtedfaſtneſs of his faith, and the perfect ſubmiſſion of his obedience, that he made not the leaſt heſitation at it; but out of reverence and regard to the divine command, he readily and chearfully obeyed God therein. By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Iſaac. There are two difficulties concerning this matter. For it ſeems contrary to

ſcripture, and to reaſon, that God ſhould tempt any man; becauſe, he knows what every man will do, without trying their faith and obedience. It ſeems contrary to ſcripture, which ſays, God tempts no man. But though it is true, that God tempts no man to commit ſin, yet he may try their faith and obedience with great difficulties, to make them the more illuſtrious. Thus Abraham, Job, and even our bleſſed Saviour was tempted. It alſo ſeems contrary to reaſon. But God does not try men for His own information, but to give an illuſtrious proof and example to others, of faith and obedience. And the excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience in this inſtance, will appear the more illuſtrious, if we conſider the firmneſs, ſtedfaſtneſs, and conſtancy of his faith and reſolution, notwithſtanding the objections againſt it, and the difficulty of the thing.

The firmneſs and ſtedfaſtneſs of his faith will appear, if we conſider that the objections againſt this command were enough to ſhake the ſtrongeſt faith, and even to make a wiſe and good man doubt whether the command was from God; namely, becauſe of the horrid nature of this command; the great ſcandal likely to follow upon it; and the conſequence of which ſeemed to render void the former promiſe of God to Abraham. The horrid nature of the command, was, for a father to kill his own child. A thing moſt barbarous and unnatural; contrary to the law of nature, and to that kindneſs and affection, which God had planted in the hearts of parents towards their children; an affection ſo natural and ſtrong, that many would redeem their children's lives, at the hazard of their own. It muſt therefore ſeem very ſtrange, that God ſhould command what was contrary to it; and it increaſed the horror of the fact, that his ſon was innocent, and was to be ſlain with his

his own hands. It would grieve the heart of any father to give up his ſon to death, though never ſo undutiful and diſobedient; how deep then muſt it affect Abraham, to give up his innocent ſon to death; as Iſaac appears to be? God ſays, "that he "was the ſon whom his father loved." But that a father ſhould be commanded not only to give up his ſon to death, but to ſlay him with his own hands; not only to be a ſpectator, but the actor in this tragedy: what good father, where nature was ſo hard preſſed, but would have conſidered ſuch a revelation, as the ſuggeſtion and illuſion of an evil ſpirit, rather than the command of God? And yet Abraham's faith was ſuch, as not to queſtion this revelation of God.

And the grievous ſcandal likely to follow from it, was another great objection againſt it. The report of ſuch an action, would in all appearance blemiſh the reputation, even of ſo good a man, with all ſober conſiderate perſons, who could not but cenſure him for a wicked and unnatural man. It was therefore a very hard caſe, for a man to be put to ſacrifice at once the two deareſt things in the world, his ſon and his reputation. For who would believe, he could have an expreſs revelation and command from God for it? The act had in appearance ſo much horror, that it was not eaſily credible God ſhould command it; ſo that the pretence of revelation for it, ſo far from excuſing his fault, muſt have been eſteemed an high aggravation of it, by adding the boldeſt impiety, to the moſt barbarous inhumanity. And the enemies of his religion might be ready to ſay, this is your excellent good man, the friend of God, who was ſo cruel an enemy to his ſon. All this he probably conſidered; but it did not move him, being reſolved to obey God, and leave it to his wiſdom to provide againſt all the inconveniencies attending it.

But the ſtrongeſt objection of all, was the horrible conſequence of the thing, which ſeemed to claſh with former revelations, and to make void the promiſe God had made to Abraham, that in his ſeed all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed; which promiſe we read in the text was expreſsly limited to Iſaac and his poſterity, who had then no ſon. This objection is really ſo cogent, that if Abraham had not full ſatisfaction about it, he might juſtly have queſtioned the truth of the revelation. But Abraham's faith was ſo ſtrong, as not to be ſhaken by this. Hence appears the conſtancy of his reſolution to obey God. For though he was firmly perſuaded, that this command to kill his ſon, was really from God; yet to obey God in ſo difficult a caſe, as to kill his own and only ſon, whom he loved, in whom he placed all his hopes of a happy poſterity, and with his own hands to deſtroy him and all his hopes together: This muſt be a ſtrong faith, to engage a man to obedience in ſo difficult an inſtance. But what renders his obedience ſtill more remarkable, is the deliberateneſs of the action. That his obedience might be the more glorious, God would have it done upon full conſideration; and therefore bid him go to the mountain, three days journey from where he was, to offer up his ſon. Acts of virtue and obedience, are like ſin and vice; the more deliberate the ſin, the more calm and ſedate the man is when he commits it, the greater is the fault; for when done by ſurprize in the heat of temptation, there is ſome excuſe for it. And ſo in acts of virtue and obedience, if attended with difficulty, the more deliberately they are done, the more virtue and greater praiſe, is due to them.

That Abraham's obedience might want nothing to heighten it, God ſeems on purpoſe to order

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so long a space, between the command and performance. He gives him time to consider and weigh the command, and every part of this difficult duty; he affords him an opportunity to reason, argue and debate the case; and for natural affection, flesh and blood, to raise all its forces against the resolution he had taken up. And we may easily imagine, what conflict this good man had within himself, the three days he travelled to the mountain; how his heart was ready to break betwixt his duty to God, and his affection to his child; and when he came thither, and all things were ready, the altar, the wood, the fire and the knife, it must needs wound him to the heart when his innocent son asked him, "where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" It must be a strong faith, a mighty resolution, that could make him hold out three days, against the assaults of his own nature, and the presence of his son; and yet this did not stagger him in his duty, but being strong in faith, he gave glory to God, by one of the most miraculous acts of obedience, that was ever required from any man.

But it will be proper to consider the reasonableness of Abraham's faith, and how he could satisfy himself, in so intricate perplexed a case. For his faith was not an obstinate stubborn persuasion, but the result of the wisest reasoning and sobereſt consideration. He counted, the word in the original is, he reasoned with himself, that God was able to raise him up from the dead. So that he debated the matter, and fully satisfied himself, concerning the objections and difficulties of the case; and being assured it was a divine command, he resolved to obey it. As to the horrid crime of slaying his innocent son, Abraham had no reason to scruple this, at the command of God; for he being the author of life hath power over it, and may take it away when he will, and make whom he pleaseth instru-

ments to execute his command. It was indeed a hard caſe, conſidering natural affection; and therefore God did not permit it to be done. But God's right over the lives of men, and his authority to command any one to execute his pleaſure in ſuch a caſe, admits of no diſpute. Though God hath planted ſtrong affections in parents towards their children, yet he hath not excluded his own ſovereign right, This he always excepts, and which removes the objections of injuſtice in the preſent caſe.

As to the ſcandal of it, that could be no great obj ction, at a time when parents had an abſolute power over their children, and might put them to dea h without being accountable for it. Nay, in later times among the Romans, parents had a power of life and death over their children, and might ſell them for ſlaves; ſo that this did not much ſtick with Abraham, it being then no unuſual thing: and the command of God, who hath abſolute power over the lives of his creatures, is certainly a juſt reaſon; for who need ſcruple doing that by God's command, which he might have done by his own authority, without being accountable to any but God. As to the objection, that the ſlaying of Iſaac would overthrow the promiſe God had made to Abraham, "that in Iſaac his ſeed "ſhould be called;" this ſeems to be the great difficulty, and here he uſes his reaſon to reconcile the ſeeming contradiction; for "he reaſon-"ed, that God was able to raiſe Iſaac up from "the dead, from whence alſo he had received "him in a figure;" plainly referring to the miraculous birth of Iſaac, when his parents were paſt the age of having children; which was little leſs then a reſurrection from the dead. So that Abraham reaſoned thus; that God who gave Iſaac at firſt in ſo miraculous a manner, was

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able by another miracle to reſtore him to life again, after he was dead, and to make him the father of many nations. In his reaſoning about this matter, he gives the utmoſt weight to whatever might tend to vindicate the truth and faithfulneſs of God's promiſe, and to make his revelations conſiſtent with one another. Having thus explained the words, and cleared up ſome difficulty and obſcurity in them, I will proceed to make ſome obſervations from what has been ſaid, that may be of uſe to us, And.

Hence it appears, that human nature is capable of clear and full ſatisfaction, concerning a divine revelation. For had not Abraham been fully aſſured, that this was a command from God, he would certainly have ſpared his ſon; and its moſt reaſonable to believe, that thoſe to whom God is pleaſed to reveal his will, are certainly aſſured thereof, or it would be in vain and to no purpoſe. Though we know not how this may be done, yet we may be ſure, that God can work in the mind of man a firm perſuaſion of the truth and certainty of a revelation coming from him. But then, he will never offer any thing to a man's belief, that plainly contradicts the natural and eſſential notions of his mind, for this would be to deſtroy his own work. For inſtance, we cannot ſuppoſe that God will reveal any thing, which contradicts the eſſential perfections of the divine nature, for ſuch a revelation would be a downright contradiction. The revelation which God ma e to Abraham concerning the ſacrificing of his ſon, was by an audible voice, and he was fully ſatisfied, that it was from God. As this was not the firſt of many revelations God made to him, ſo he knew by manifold experience, that he was not deceived, and therefore he the more

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confided in the truth and goodneſs of God; and very probable, when God firſt appeared to Abraham, he ſhewed himſelf in ſo glorious a manner, as was ſufficient to his conviction; which made him not ſtagger at this of ſacrificing his ſon, being fully ſatisfied it was from God.

From hence I alſo obſerve the great and neceſſary uſe of reaſon, in matters of faith. Abraham's reaſon was a mighty ſtrength and help to his faith. For if his reaſon had not reconciled theſe two revelations which ſeemed to claſh, he could not poſſibly have believed them both to be from God; becauſe this natural notion, that God cannot contradict himſelf, every man more firmly believes than any revelation whatever. Abraham in this ſtrait reaſoned with himſelf, that God was able to raiſe him from the dead. There are ſome perſons of more zeal than knowledge, who clamour much againſt the uſe of reaſon, in matters of faith; but this is moſt unreaſonable. For divine revelation doth not endow men with new faculties, but only propoſes new objects to thoſe they had before. Revelation is to be diſcerned by reaſon; for whatever God reveals he does it to our underſtanding, that we may judge of it. We are "not to believe every ſpirit, but to try the ſpirits whether they are of God; for many falſe prophets are gone out into the world." Many that falſely pretend to inſpiration. But theſe pretenders can only be diſcovered by our reaſon, in comparing the evidence for the one and the other. This farther appears by conſidering the nature of faith, which is an aſſent of the mind to ſomething revealed by God, grounded upon evidence; for no man can believe a thing, unleſs he has ſome reaſon to do ſo. For to be confident of a thing without reaſon is not faith, but an obſtinate and preſumptuous perſuaſion. This is ſtill more evident, if we conſider the method that

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muſt be uſed to convince any one of the truth of religion; which is to ſatisfy a man's reaſon by proper arguments, that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation, and that no other book can with equal reaſon pretend to be ſo. And therefore we muſt have recourſe to reaſon, for the proof of our religion. Indeed,

The higheſt commendations that are given in ſcripture to any one's faith, are on account of the reaſonableneſs of it. Abraham's faith is famous, becauſe he reaſoned himſelf into it, notwithſtanding the objections to the contrary. Our Saviour commended the centurion's faith, becauſe he reaſoned, that if he, who was himſelf under authority, could command thoſe that were under him; much more could he that had a divine power and commiſſion, do what he pleaſed by his word. And our Saviour ſo much admired his faith, as to ſay, I have "not found ſo great faith, no, not in Iſra-"el." Again, the apoſtles were divinely inſpired, and yet the Bereans are commended, becauſe they ſatisfied themſelves in the reaſons of their belief, before they aſſented to the doctrines delivered them, even by teachers that were certainly inſpired. Nor were any reproved in ſcripture for their unbelief, but where ſufficient reaſon and evidence was offered them. The Iſraelites were blamed for their infidelity, not till after ſuch mighty wonders had been wrought for their conviction. The Jews are not ſimply condemned for their unbelief, but for rejecting the clear evidence offered to them. "If I had not done amongſt them, ſays "our Saviour, the works which no other man "did, they had not had ſin." In truth, there can be no greater prejudice to religion, than to decline the uſe of reaſon in ſuch matters. If we have no reaſon for our religion, then it muſt be unreaſonable. Indeed, it is reaſon enough to

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ſay, that God hath revealed it, this being the ſtrongeſt reaſon for our belief: But then we muſt be able to prove it. If we reject reaſon, we level the beſt religion in the world with the moſt abſurd enthuſiaſm. We need deſire no better evidence that any man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare againſt reaſon, and thereby acknowledge that reaſon is againſt him; men may vilify reaſon as much as they pleaſe, but ſhe generally hath her full revenge on all ſuch.

From hence I farther obſerve, that God obligeth no man to believe plain and evident contradictions, as matters of faith. Abraham could not reaſonably have believed this ſecond revelation, to have been from God, had he not ſome way reconciled it with the firſt. For a man muſt not ſo ſubmit his reaſon to divine revelation, as to believe God againſt God himſelf; ſome think they mightily oblige God, by believing plain contradictions; but this cannot be. He that made man a reaſonable creature, will not like any one, who endeavours to make God himſelf appear unreaſonable. Therefore no ſervice, no obedience, no faith is acceptable to God, but what is reaſonable. For he that can believe plain contradictions, may believe any thing the moſt abſurd; becauſe to ſuch, truth and falſehood are all one. It may be alſo obſerved, that one great cauſe of the defect of men's obedience, is the weakneſs of their faith. If we believe the commands, the promiſes and threatnings of God, as firmly as Abraham did, what ſhould we not do, or ſuffer in obedience to him? If our faith was as ſtrong and vigorous as his, the effects would be as great and conſpicuous. If we were verily perſuaded, that all the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel, will one day be made good; "what manner of perſons ſhould we be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs?" How would the thoughts

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of another word, raiſe us above the vanities of this life; ſecure us from the moſt powerful temptations that can aſſault us; and make us prepare for that ſolemn account, which we muſt one day give to God the judge of all? It is the want of a firm and ſteady perſuaſion of theſe things, that make our devotions dead and heartleſs; our good reſolutions weak and inconſtant. This makes us an eaſy prey to every temptation. So that in proportion to the ſtrength or weakneſs of our faith, our obedience to God will be more or leſs conſtant, unifrom and perfect; becauſe faith is the great ſource and ſpring of all the virtues of a good life. Again,

Hence it appears how utterly inexcuſable we are if we diſobey the eaſy precepts of the goſpel. The yoke of Chriſt is eaſy, and his burthen light, in compariſon of God's former diſpenſations. God's command to Abraham, to ſacrifice his ſon, was a hard ſaying, and who of us could have borne it? But ſhould God call us to the more difficult duties of ſelf-denial, and ſuffering for truth and righteouſneſs ſake, we muſt, after Abraham's example, not refuſe to part with any thing, even life itſelf. And the comfort, ſupport, and glorious rewards expreſsly promiſed to our obedience in ſuch a caſe, is encouragement enough to make a difficult duty eaſy. For God will not ſuffer thoſe who ſincerely love him and his truth, to be tempted above what they are able. What God required of Abraham, he did not deſign ſhould be executed; but one great deſign was, to be a type and figure of that immenſe love and kindneſs, which he intended to all mankind in the ſacrifice of his ſon, as a propitiation for the ſins of the world. "That by this one ſacrifice of himſelf once offered, he might perfect forever them that are ſanctified, and obtain eternal redemption for us."

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Another obſervation I would make from what has been ſaid, is, that true faith in God, never leads men to the practice of what is in its own nature immoral. Of this ſort are the idolatries in the church of Rome, ſo deſtructive of all natural and revealed notions of God. As alſo the cruelties and barbarities practiſed by them, fundamentally deſtructive of all virtue, and of the eternal and unalterable differences of good and evil. Things commanded by the meer poſitive command of God, may, no doubt, be changed by the ſame authority; things contrary to that part of the law of nature, which is founded originally in the will of God, and not in the neceſſary eſſential nature of things, may be altered upon particular and extraordinary occaſions, by the immediate and expreſs command of God. But that part of the law of nature, which is founded not on the will, but on the very exiſtence of God, and on the eſſential, eternal, and immutable nature and relation of things; this in no circumſtance is capable of any variation. For inſtance, that the life of an innocent perſon ſhould be taken away by the authority of any power upon earth, is contrary to the law of nature; and yet, ſince the right, which even an innocent perſon has to his life, is not founded in the eſſential nature of things, but merely in the will and free gift of God; it is plain he may as juſtly appoint it to be taken away by any other means he pleaſes, as by a fever, or ſome other diſtemper. But had God commanded Abraham to forſake the worſhip of himſelf, and turn to idols; or commanded him to hate his innocent ſon, or to take delight in cruelty, barbarity, and tyranny; the command had been in its nature impoſſible and abſurd. Thus the ſeven wicked nations of Canaan might, by a particular and immediate command of God, as juſtly be extirpated by the ſword of the Iſrael-

Israelites, as by an earthquake, or lightning from heaven. But that without any express command from God, under a general pretence of being alone possessors of the truth, a perpetual, tyrannical enmity should be carried on against virtuous men of all nations, and a power established of changing even the nature of virtue and vice; this is a wickedness that never had an equal; and subverts fundamentally that part of the law of nature, which is founded, not on the will, but on the very being of God, on the necessary, essential, and eternal difference of good and evil.

The last observation I shall make, is, that faith, when spoken of in scripture as a moral virtue, never signifies mere belief, but always includes fidelity, or faithfulness: A faithful and stedfast adherence to such principles, even in times of greatest danger and difficulty, as are the foundation or ground of virtue and obedience. Abraham believed God; that is, he had faith and fidelity towards God, he firmly adhered to his principles, and acted steadily upon them in matters of the greatest tryal and difficulty. "He kept the faith that was committed "to his charge, and therefore it was counted to "him for righteousness;" that is, as being itself really righteous. From hence it is evident, what the writers of the new testament intend, when they tell us of Abraham; tho' he was not justified by the works of the law, such as circumcision and the like, because this testimony was given of him before he was circumcised; yet the faith which justified him, was an active and steady principle of works of righteousness. And he was therefore justified by that faith, because it was such a faith, as "wrought with his works, and by works was "his faith made perfect." The application they make of it to us, is, that only they who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham, are, in a religious

gious ſenſe Abraham's ſeed. That is, they only ſhall finally be accepted of God, whoſe faith is like his, a real principle of virtue and obedience. Otherwiſe, it matters little, whoſe name we are called by, or whoſe religion we profeſs. God is able of theſe ſtones, ſooner than of impenitent and incorrigible ſinners, to raiſe up children unto Abraham, and unto Chriſt.

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe CXI. Bp. *Atterbury.*

Of REASON and RELIGION.

Rom. xii. 1.

Which is your reaſonable ſervice.

BY reaſonable ſervice is here meant, ſuch a rational way of worſhipping almighty God; as agrees with the ſtricteſt notions of right reaſon: Such a worſhip as is moſt ſuitable for a pure and holy God to receive, and for man to offer; ſuch as tends moſt to promote the glory of God, and to enable mens nature, by bringing them to ſuch perfection in this world, as may qualify them for the bleſſedneſs of the next. It alſo ſignifies the ſervice of our ſouls as well as bodies; of our minds and underſtandings, as well as our wills and affections. The whole man muſt be offered up a living ſacrifice; and every power of our bodies, every faculty of our ſouls, muſt be employed in God's worſhip. But this will more evidently appear, by conſidering how juſt and reaſonable the ſervice is, which God requires of us in the goſpel. And this is the aſſent of the underſtanding to the truths it contains; the obedience of our wills to the duties it enjoins; the zeal and fervour of our affections in the performance of them.

The truths contained in the goſpel, which require the aſſent of the underſtanding, are ſuch as are evident by the light of nature; or which may be collected from natural principles, by rational and plain

inferences; or elſe delivered down to us, by men inſpired by the holy ſpirit. Thus it is moſt clear and certain to every ſober enquirer, that t[illegible] is one firſt cauſe of things, from whom all c[illegible] derive their original; that he is a being tra[illegible]endently perfect. And from hence the wiſe and virtuous men of all ages conclude, that this being, who is inveſted with infinite wiſdom and power, does aſſuredly rule and govern the world, with the ſtricteſt juſtice, and moſt impartial equity. That having endued mankind with rational ſouls, and a liberty of determining their actions, either to good or evil; he will certainly call them to account, and reward or puniſh them in another world, according to their works. To theſe truths the very heathens gave their aſſent. They eaſily collected by rational inferences, that this ſtupendous fabrick of the world muſt needs be the contrivance of ſome ſkilful artiſt; and that ſuch exquiſite beauty and uniformity as is ſo viſible in every part of it, muſt naturally be infinitely more beautiful and excellent in the author himſelf, than in any part of his work. They alſo conſidered the perfections of the ſoul, that ray of divinity which informs the whole body; how many different operations it performs at the ſame time, having a power to reflect on its own actions, and by comparing of things, to make probable conjectures of what will come to paſs. From theſe reflections they wiſely concluded, that ſuch wonderful effects could not proceed from matter and motion; but that the ſoul muſt be a ſpiritual, thinking and immortal being, which will ſurvive the body after it is diſſolved and mouldered into duſt; and be accountable hereafter for all its tranſactions in this world. All this is evident from the light of nature and reaſon, and will gain the aſſent and belief of every ſerious, conſiderate perſon, as being what naturally reſults from the exerciſe of reaſon.

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But what is most doubted of, is, whether the truths taught us by divine revelation, are also discoverable by the maxims of reason. Some have taken much pains to set faith and reason in opposition to each other; and to make men believe they must lay aside their reason, when they contemplate the mysteries of the Christian religion: That they must blindly give up their assent to certain articles of faith, and take them in the same terms they are proposed, without any previous enquiry, or asking why, or wherefore; and such even seem most inclinable to believe what they do not understand. To obviate this growing mistake and error, I shall endeavour to clear up this important enquiry, by the following observations.

There is no being in the world, whose essence is fully comprehended by human reason. We only see the outside of things, and form conclusions from external appearances; but their nature and essence are chiefly concealed from us. We are ignorant of the cause and reason of the most obvious phænomena of nature. Nay, we know little of those beings we daily converse with, and are strangers to our own make and frame. When we reflect on our bodies, we ought to stand amazed at our composition, and confess, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. And yet whatever knowledge we have obtained, was gained by the use and exercise of our reason. Reason is a spark of heavenly fire; a divine light which God has placed in us, to dispel the mists of ignorance and error; and to enable us to distinguish truth from falshood. And tho' it has been much obscured by the fall of man, yet it is still sufficient to conduct us so far, as that by the assistance of God's grace, and the light of the holy spirit, we may be informed and instructed in all things necessary to obtain eternal happiness.

Reaſon, if taken for the faculty, is that reaſonable ſoul, which God hath planted in us; if for the act, it is the exerciſe of the faculties of the ſoul, in apprehending and forming a judgment of ſuch objects as are preſented to the mind. Hence all knowledge, whether human or divine, is obtained by the uſe and exerciſe of reaſon. The promiſe to the apoſtles, of the ſpirit, to lead them into all truth, was made good to them, by ſecretly informing their underſtandings, with the knowledge of ſuch heavenly myſteries as God thought fit to reveal. But this promiſe when applied to us, is performed by inclining us to conſult the holy ſcriptures, and diligently to uſe thoſe means which God has appointed for our information. Reaſon is therefore the judge of all ſuch truths as are adequate to reaſon. For as ſenſe is the proper judge of ſuch objects as concern the ſenſitive faculty; as the eye is the only judge of colours, the ear of ſounds; ſo reaſon is the ſole judge of all ſuch truths as are level to and within the ſphere of its faculties.

God gave us reaſon, to enable us to contemplate the wonders of creation and providence, to praiſe and adore the great author of them. Nay, reaſon is the proper judge what truths are revealed, and what not. God has appealed to the reaſon of mankind, even as to the reaſonableneſs of thoſe truths which reaſon cannot comprehend, and are only diſcovered by divine revelation. To affirm any truths are revealed in ſcripture, unleſs we have good reaſon to believe it, is not ſufficient, becauſe revelation is often produced to maintain contrary and even contradictory opinions; and therefore it is our reaſon only, that can find out and diſtinguiſh the true from the pretended revelation. And whatever ſeems to be revealed as a truth, which implies a plain contradiction to the natural notions of our minds, cannot poſſibly be true. For inſtance, it is highly

highly reaſonable to conceive that the divine eſſence or attributes of God are infinitely myſterious and incomprehenſible; and therefore we ought to believe whatever he has certainly revealed of himſelf, tho' it ſurpaſſes our weak underſtandings to apprehend the manner of it. But ſhould any one affirm that it is revealed in ſcripture, that God is a cruel, arbitrary, and unjuſt being; I could ſafely anſwer ſuch without leſſening the authority of holy writ, that he miſtakes the meaning of thoſe places, by which he would prove this abſurd opinion. For if I conceive God to be a being of all poſſible perfection, it is a plain contradiction, to impute injuſtice and cruelty to ſuch a holy and pure being. Such texts of ſcripture therefore muſt be interpreted in ſome other ſenſe, more agreeable to thoſe natural notions which God has imprinted on the minds of men. Hence it appears, that all thoſe truths to which we are indiſpenſably obliged to yield our aſſent, are agreeable to right reaſon, and therefore the Chriſtian religion muſt needs be our reaſonable ſervice; becauſe the duties it requires us to perform, are alſo our reaſonable ſervice. This is evident if we conſider our duty in relation to God, our neighbour, or ourſelves; for the reaſonableneſs of them will appear, from the nature of God, of our own beings, and the good effects which are conſequent to the performance of our duties.

The reaſonableneſs of thoſe duties which immediately relate to God, ſuch as the loving, fearing and worſhipping of them, will clearly appear from the conſideration of God's nature. If we conſider God as the firſt cauſe of all things, or as inveſted with all his adorable perfections and attributes, diſcovered to us by natural reaſon and revelation, it muſt be highly agreeable to the dictates of reaſon, that we ſhould offer to him the ſervice both of our

ſouls and bodies: by loving and admiring his amiable perfections, adoring and reverencing his divine majeſty, relying and depending on him, and expreſſing the ſentiments of our hearts, by the language of our tongues. For if God is the firſt cauſe of all things, who by the word of his power created this wonderful frame of the world out of nothing; who ſupplies us with all the good things we enjoy, opening his hand, and diſpenſing his benefits to us; then ſurely it is highly reaſonable, that we ſhould love, worſhip, and adore this our ſupreme and bountiful benefactor. His power and dominion over us, call loudly for our worſhip and acknowledgment; his goodneſs and beneficence, for our love, eſteem and gratitude; nay, every perfection in the divine nature, if duly conſidered, muſt raiſe ſuitable affections in our hearts, and direct us in the worſhip of our maker. And as an eminent father of our church judiciouſly obſerved, "that religious worſhip muſt needs be moſt acceptable to God, which is moſt conformable to thoſe natural notions, which we bear of him in our minds." And from the conſideration of thoſe glorious attributes of God, his power, goodneſs and veracity; we may eaſily collect how reaſonable it is, that we ſhould worſhip, love, fear, and truſt in him, in which is contained all our duty to God.

This alſo appears, if we conſider the condition of our beings. We are poor, frail, impotent creatures, and depend on God, for our life, and whatever we enjoy; every moment we breathe is the gift of his bounty, and we are preſerved by the ſame almighty power, that at firſt created us. How reaſonable then is it, that we ſhould own our dependance upon God, by a daily acknowledgment of his mercies; that we ſhould retain a grateful ſenſe of his benefits, dread the loſs of his favour, rely upon him to ſupply our neceſſities, and to deliver

us from all thoſe dangers and calamities to which we are continually expoſed? Eſpecially, ſince by the performance of theſe duties, we contribute to our own welfare, and encreaſe our own happineſs. For to worſhip God is both our privilege and duty, and affords a moſt reaſonable pleaſure. There is a wonderful delight in ſerving God, and performing the exerciſes of devotion. It is the greateſt pleaſure and happineſs on earth, for a man to have his mind filled with glorious conceptions of the divine majeſty; to have his affections placed on this ſolid and durable good; and to be able to depend on him in all dangers, to repoſe himſelf under the ſhadow of his wings, to reſign his will to God's, under the moſt deplorable circumſtances, and to have ſuch a grateful ſenſe of all his mercies and loving-kindneſs to him, as will kindle in his heart the flames of love and charity. Every good and virtuous man takes greater pleaſure and delight in the exerciſes of devotion, than in the moſt luxurious gratifications of ſenſe. For the glory and ſervice of God, was the main and principal end of our creation; and we ought to be beſt pleaſed when we are regularly purſuing that end. And if the worſhip of God be thus our reaſonable ſervice, we ſhould take delight and pleaſure in performing it. Nor is it leſs neceſſary and reaſonable.

That thoſe duties which one neighbour owes to another, ſhould be punctually obſerved: that love, peace, and unanimity ſhould be kept up; that we ſhould love our neighbour as ourſelves, and do to all men, as we ſhould deſire to be done by, were we in their circumſtances: That every man's property ſhould be ſecured, and not to ſuffer wrong in his perſon, goods or reputation: That we ſhould be true, juſt and punctual in all our dealings: That we ſhould be content with that ſtation in the world, which God has aſſigned us, ſo as not to covet and

deſire what is another's. The duties are ſo agreeable to the natural dictates of our minds, that all muſt confeſs they are highly juſt and reaſonable, and have been practiſed by the more ſober heathens, even to the ſhame of profeſſed Chriſtians. The meek and humble Jeſus alſo taught us both by precept and example, that we ſhould 'love our enemies, 'do good to thoſe that hate us, and deſpitefully uſe 'us, and perſecute us.' And however difficult this may ſeem to be, yet upon due examination it will appear to be our reaſonable ſervice, and no leſs our intereſt than our duty. For to paſs by injuries, to love our enemies, to return good for evil, is the beſt way to maintain the peace of our own minds, as alſo our peace with God and man; and is the moſt probable method to defeat the malice of our enemies, by melting them into love and friendſhip: It is a duty enjoyned by that God who has forgiven us infinitely more ſins than we can forgive our neighbour; and who ſent his begotten ſon to die for us, when we were enemies to him. So that it appears highly juſt and reaſonable, much for our intereſt, as alſo agreeable to our duty; to paſs by injuries, to love our enemies, and to return their ill language and behaviour with our real love and eſteem. I now proceed to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of our duty, in the government of ourſelves.

And ſurely it requires not many arguments to prove, that to be temperate and ſober, to govern our paſſions, and reſtrain our appetites within due bounds, is our reaſonable ſervice; ſince the rule and meaſure by which we ought to govern all our appetites and paſſions, is that of right reaſon. If we exceed the bounds of moderation and ſin againſt our reaſon, then it is that we offend God. For he does not deny us the uſe of any the good things of this world, having furniſhed it like a plentiful ſtore-houſe for our ſuſtenance and delight; and only prohibited

hibited such things, as tho' they may be agreeable to sense, yet they are condemned by reason, as extravagant and brutish. Humanity, meekness, contentedness, diligence, chastity, temperance, are the dictates of right reason; and if duly practised will promote our happiness both here and hereafter, and carry with them their own reward. Where reason bears sway, virtue must needs prevail: Indeed, as to self-denial and mortification, so strictly enjoined by the Christian religion, this some think a hard saying; for a man to deny himself the lawful enjoyments and pleasures of this life. But if we consider, how dangerous it is to indulge our appetites to their utmost extent; that the limits between virtue and vice are exceedingly narrow; it will then appear to be highly reasonable for us to put some restraint upon ourselves, and also to pray unto God, not to lead us into temptation. To prove that the mortification of our sinful inclinations and vicious habits, is absolutely necessary and truly reasonable, we need only to consider our obligations to the contrary virtues. For if reason obliges us to be humble, it equally engages us to avoid pride. If it is our interest to be sober, intemperance must needs be to our detriment. If justice obliges us to be chaste, violence and injustice must certainly be condemned. Hence it evidently appears how reasonable it is, that God should exact the obedience of our wills, to all the duties he has enjoyned in the gospel.

And God not only requires the homage of our understanding, and the obedience of our wills, but also the zeal and fervour of our affection; in which respect also religion is our reasonable service. We must "love the Lord our God, with all our heart, "with all our mind, and with all our strength." All the faculties of our souls, all the powers of our bodies, must be employed in the service of our maker

maker. We muſt have our converſation in heaven, place our chiefeſt delight in thoſe things that will bring us there. An external compliance with the precepts of the goſpel, a joining communion with the church, and performing the duties of religion, are not the only things required of a Chriſtian. For there muſt be a vital principle within us, what the pſalmiſt calls a delight in the law of God; a love to, and pleaſure in the performance of his commands. We muſt give God our hearts and affections, make his ſervice our chiefeſt pleaſure and delight. And this is our reaſonable ſervice: for if God is our king, it is reaſonable we ſhould pay him the homage of our hearty affection to his government; if God is our father, we ought to obey him with a cordial love and filial fear; if we have received all we enjoy from God, it is certainly moſt juſt and reaſonable, that we ſhould offer to him the moſt grateful reſentments of our ſouls, filled with love and gratitude. Thus I have endeavoured to ſhew how reaſonable it is, that God ſhould require the aſſent of our underſtanding to the truth contained in his holy world; the obedience of our wills to the duties enjoyned us; and the zeal and fervour of our affections. I ſhall now make a few inferences from what has been ſaid.

Hence then it appears evident, that thoſe truths ought to be moſt readily embraced, which are cleareſt and plaineſt to our reaſon; and that that religion is the beſt, not which fills our minds with curious ſpeculations, or clogs our belief with the moſt unaccountable myſteries; but that which informs the judgment with the moſt weighty truths, ſuch as have a direct influence upon practice, and moſt clearly diſcovers the will and mind of God to us, and lays down the moſt encouraging motives to engage the performance of it. And therefore as thoſe perſons are much miſtaken, who think our

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reaſon ſufficient to bring us to the knowledge of all truth, human or divine; ſo do they err, who exclude reaſon from matters of faith; and are ſo fond of myſteries, that they will either find or make them, in the plaineſt articles of our faith. We may hence alſo infer, in what points we ought to diſtruſt our reaſon; and theſe are ſuch as reaſon tells us is above her reach: As the doctrine of the trinity, and the incarnation of our Saviour. Reaſon itſelf will inform us, that our ideas of ſpiritual beings are confuſed and imperfect; that the eſſence of the Almighty infinitely tranſcends our conceptions of him; and that our natures muſt be altered and our bodies ſpiritualized, before we can receive thoſe rays of light and knowledge, that will ſhine upon the ſoul in a ſtate of glory and happineſs. And it is worthy obſervation, that thoſe truths which are moſt myſterious, are leaſt neceſſary to be underſtood; but thoſe which are abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, lie level to every ones underſtanding, or are plainly revealed in ſcripture, and ought readily to be entertained and aſſented to by every good Chriſtian.—I alſo infer from hence, that all damnable hereſies proceed rather from the pravity of mens wills, than the error of their judgments. Natural reaſon goes a great way to inform men in the knowledge of what they ought to do and believe; and where that fails, God has offered the light of revelation to conduct them. So that the ſins of men muſt be more imputed to their perverſe wills than to their miſtaken judgments.

What great reaſon then have we Chriſtians to bleſs God for giving us ſo excellent a religion, which is built on the ſolid foundation of ſound reaſon. And ſince the Chriſtian religion has been depraved and debaſed by the corrupt gloſſes, and perverſe interpretations of ſcripture, the traditions and inventions of ſuperſtitious men; we have ſtill the more

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reaſon to bleſs God, for giving and continuing to us a religion purified and refined by a bleſſed reformation. We are not led on blindly to believe, as the church does, but have liberty to ſearch the ſcriptures, to read, weigh and conſider the truths contained therein; and from thence to learn what God requires of us. We have a religion that will bear the teſt of the ſevereſt trial; and the more it is examined, the better we ſhall like and approve of it. And the chief reaſon why we of the reformed religion are not of one mind, ſo as to hold one communion, is, that our religion is more in the tongue than in the head and heart. I mean, we love rather to talk in a religious ſtrain, than either to underſtand or practiſe it. And from hence it is, that too many cannot diſtinguiſh the fundamental from the leſs neceſſary truths; the weightier matters, from thoſe of leſſer moment, in which mutual forbearance ought to be given on both ſides. Again,

If religion is our reaſonable ſervice, then have we the beſt and moſt excellent motive to be religious. For what can more effectually recommend a holy and religious life, than the conſideration, that ſuch a ſtate is exactly agreeable to our reaſon, which is the moſt noble faculty of the ſoul? It is ſuitable to the dignity of our being, and ſuch as becomes a reaſonable creature to practiſe. Every precept of our religion tends to perfect our nature, to make us more like that excellent being, from whom all goodneſs and perfection is derived. And we may hence infer, that the more wicked men grow, the more irrational they are. For as the practice of virtue and holineſs dignifies mens nature, and raiſes it to a nearer conformity to God, ſo by indulging ourſelves in wickedneſs and vice, we debaſe our minds to the loweſt ſtate. For every ſin we commit is a departure from the rules of right reaſon; it is doing a baſe,

base, unworthy, and unmanly act; which a wise man would be ashamed of, and we shall sorely lament, whenever we seriously consider about it. By contracting habits of vice, we render our understandings less capable to inform us when we do amiss. And hence men become so deeply immersed in sensuality, that they commit sin with greediness; and will not discern the deformity and unreasonableness of vice, thinking it commendable and praise-worthy, to be wicked, and to glory in their shame. But this is certainly a most sad and miserable condition. And that we may be careful to avoid it; let every one of us thus reason with himself; "What doth the Lord require of me, but to "do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with "my God?" What doth God expect from us, but that we should follow the dictate of our reason, and make use of that reasonable faculty he has given us, to distinguish between good and evil; and by this candle of the Lord, to direct our ways? And then we shall hereafter be exalted to the highest degree of glory. But if we live by sense, and not by reason; if we submit to that "law in our members, "which warreth against the law of our minds;" if we pursue after earthly things, place our happiness in gratifying the sensual and brutish part of us, our bodily appetites and fleshly lusts; then have we nothing to expect in the next life, but looking for the just vengeance, and dreadful indignation of God, for the abuse of those talents he has committed to our trust. Lastly,

Hence we may learn to reflect on God's wonderful goodness, in suiting our duty to the nature of our beings; and having made us reasonable creatures, to expect from us only a reasonable service. And tho' our notions of good and evil are much obscured and defaced, by the sin of our first parents, yet herein is manifest the wonderful goodness of God,

God, in that he has procured a remedy for this deſperate diſeaſe; and afforded to every one the bleſſed influences of his grace, and holy ſpirit, which will be ſufficient to lead us into all knowledge neceſſary to ſalvation, and enable us to perform whatever he expects from us. What then ſhall we render unto the Lord for his mercies and loving kindneſs, to the children of men; let us offer up to him the living ſacrifice of a pure heart, and a conſcience undefiled, which will be more acceptable to him, than the cattle on a thouſand hills. Let us obſerve his precepts which are thus righteous, juſt and good; and walk in the way of his commandments, all the days of our lives.

Diſcourſe CXII. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

The WICKEDNESS of SCOFFING at RELIGION.

2 Pet. iii. 3.

—There ſhall come in the laſt days ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts.

IN our Saviour's time, there was a common perſuaſion among Chriſtians, that the day of the Lord was at hand; and becauſe Chriſt did not come when ſome looked for him, they derided the Chriſtians, as enduring perſecution in a vain expectation of what was never likely to happen. They ſaw every thing continue, "as they were from the beginning of the world," notwithſtanding the apprehenſion of Chriſtians concerning the approaching end of it. They perceived no change or alteration, except that one generation died, and another ſucceeded in the room of it; but as to the world, it ſtill remained as it was; and might, for what they knew, continue ſo forever. So that the principles of theſe men, ſeem to be much the ſame with thoſe of the Epicureans, who denied the providence of God and the immortality of the ſoul; and conſequently a future judgment, which will ſentence men to rewards and puniſhments in another world. Theſe great and fundamental principles of all religion, they derided as the fancies and dreams of melancholy men, who were weary of the world, and pleaſed themſelves with imaginary happineſs, and perfect

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eaſy in another life. But as they believed none of theſe things, therefore they gave all manner of licenſe and indulgence to their luſts.

The character here given of theſe ſcoffers is, that they walk after their own luſts. And no wonder if they denied a future judgment, when they gave themſelves up to all manner of ſenſuality. St. Jude alſo tells us, that there ſhall come in the laſt days mockers, walking after their own ungodly luſts, ſenſual, not having the ſpirit. So that thoſe who profanely ſcoff at religion, are ſenſual men of licentious lives; it flows from their very temper and diſpoſition to deride God and religion; which is the higheſt kind of impiety. But men do not uſually arrive to this degree of wickedneſs at firſt, but come to it gradually. The Pſalmiſt elegantly deſcribes this to us, "bleſſed is the man that walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornful." Men generally are corrupted by bad counſel and company, which is called walking in the counſel of the ungodly; then they habituate themſelves to their vicious practices, which is ſtanding in the way of ſinners; and at laſt they proceed to a reſolved contempt of all religion, which is called, ſetting in the ſeat of the ſcornful. For when men once indulge themſelves in wicked courſes, their vicious inclinations ſway their underſtandings, and make them diſbelieve thoſe truths, which contradict their luſts. Every inordinate luſt and paſſion is a falſe biaſs upon mens underſtandings, which naturally incline them to atheiſm; and then men will not believe as the evidence of things is, but according to their humour and intereſt. When men live as if there was no God, to them it becomes neceſſary there ſhould be none; and then they are glad to find arguments to fortify themſelves in this perſuaſion. Diſſolute perſons diſregard

diſregard religion, becauſe they would not be ſubject to the ſtrict rules and laws of it. They hate and deſpiſe it, becauſe it reproves their vices. Men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved. The principles of religion and the doctrines of Chriſt, are terrible enemies to wicked men, for they are continually galling their conſciences; and this makes them declaim againſt religion and the ſcriptures. For there is no eaſe and comfort to be had from atheiſtical principles. So that the true reaſon why any man is an atheiſt, is, becauſe he is a wicked man. Religion would reſtrain his luſts, and therefore he deſpiſes and ridicules it.

But the heinouſneſs and aggravation of this ſin of ſcoffing, will more plainly appear, by the following ſuppoſitions; not that there is any truth in them, but only to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this humour. Suppoſe then, that theſe men are in the right in denying the principles of religion, and that what they pretend is true; yet ſince the generality of men believe otherwiſe, it is great rudeneſs and incivility at leaſt, to ſcoff at theſe things; and was there no ſuch thing as ſin, ſtill it would be a great offence againſt the laws of civil converſation. Every man indeed has a right to diſpute againſt a falſe religion, and to repreſent all its abſurd and ridiculous conſequences, as the ancient fathers did with the heathens; but it is a barbarous incivility for any man to make ſport and a jeſt of what others call religion, and this not intending to convince their reaſon, but only to provoke their rage. For the atheiſt can pretend no obligation of conſcience, why he ſhould even diſpute the principles of religion, much leſs deride them. He who profeſſes any religion may pretend conſcience for oppoſing a contrary

trary religion; but he that denies all religion, can pretend no conſcience for any thing. If the notion of a deity be founded in a natural fear, it is in vain to expel it; for whatever violence may be offered to nature by endeavouring to reaſon men into a contrary perſuaſion, nature will at laſt return to itſelf, and then the fear will be increaſed, from the apparent dangerous conſequences of ſuch an impiety.

But if we ſuppoſe the apprehenſion of a deity to have no foundation in nature, but to ariſe from tradition, confirmed by the prejudice of education, the difficulty of removing it will ſtill be very great; becauſe what men take in by education is next to what is natural. And could it be extinguiſhed, no advantage would accrue. For, except the avoiding of perſecution for religion, there is no benefit that can ariſe from the principles of atheiſm. All the advantage that men make of them, is to take the liberty to do what they pleaſe; to be more ſenſual and unjuſt than others; to ſurfeit themſelves and to be often ſick; to make mankind their enemy by their unjuſt and diſhoneſt actions; and to live more uneaſily than other perſons. So that the principles of religion, the belief of a God and another life, by obliging men to be virtuous, do really promote their temporal happineſs. And all the privilege that atheiſm pretends to, is to give a looſe to vice, which is naturally attended with many temporal inconveniencies. The atheiſt then has not the leaſt pretence of reaſon to diſpute againſt religion, much leſs to ſcoff at and ridicule it.

And where no obligation of conſcience nor of reaſon can be pretended, then certainly the laws of civility ought to take place. And as thoſe who profeſs to believe there is a God, and that the principles of religion are true, have a great veneration for theſe things; there cannot be a greater inſo-

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lence, than for a man to fall foul of those things in company that he knows to have a great reverence for them. But this is still worse, when we consider that the generality of mankind are of the same opinion; and this makes it the greatest rudeness and incivility that can be imagined. I have been the larger on this head, in regard to such as are better educated, who are guilty of this vice; because they pretend to understand the laws of behaviour and decencies of conversation better than other men. Again,

But supposing it was doubtful whether there be a God or not; or whether the principles of religion be true or not; and that the arguments were equal on both sides; yet it is both a sin and a folly to deride such things. And here I suppose as much as the atheist can with any reason pretend to. For no man can pretend to demonstrate there is no God, nor a future state after this. These being negatives are capable of no proof, unless a man could shew them to be impossible. But supposing the probabilities equal on both sides, yet even then it is monstrous folly to deride these things; because tho' the arguments on both sides are equal, yet the danger and hazard is infinitely unequal. For if it prove true there is no God, the principles of religion and virtue do in their own nature tend to make the religious man more happy in this world, than the atheist. Because they give satisfaction to his mind, and his conscience is thereby freed from many fearful apprehensions, which the atheist feels. Besides the practice of religion and virtue naturally promotes our temporal felicity. It is more for a man's health and reputation, and more for his advantage in other worldly respects, to lead a virtuous, than a vicious course of life. And as for the other world, if there be no God, the case of the religious man and the atheist will be the same; because they will both be extin-

guiſhed by death, and inſenſible of any farther happineſs and miſery. But ſhould it prove true, that there is a God, and that the ſouls of men are to receive the juſt reward of their actions; then the caſe of the religious man and the atheiſt muſt be vaſtly different. And where ſhall the wicked and ungodly then appear? What will then be the portion of thoſe who have affronted God, derided his word, and made a mock of every thing ſacred and religious? What muſt ſuch expect, but to be rejected by him, whom they have renounced; and to feel the dreadful effects of that power and juſtice, which they have deſpiſed? So that tho' the argments on both ſides were equal, yet the danger is not. On the one ſide there is none; on the other, there is infinite hazard. It muſt therefore be a monſtrous folly, for any to make a mock of thoſe things which he knows not whether they be true or not; and if they be, they are far from being of any jeſting matter. Laſtly,

Suppoſe there be a God, and the principles of religion are true, then it is not only a heinous impiety, but perfect madneſs, to ſcoff at theſe things. And that there is a God, and that the principles of religion are true, I have already endeavoured to prove. Therefore it is not only the higheſt pitch of impiety, but the greateſt folly to deride theſe things. To be diſobedient to the commands of God is a great contempt; but to deny his being, to make ſport with his word, to ridicule it by turning the wiſe and weighty ſayings of that book into raillery, is a moſt direct affront to almighty God. Beſides, this profane ſpirit is an argument of a moſt incorrigible temper. The wiſe man ſpeaks of the ſcorner, as one of the worſt ſort of ſinners, and hardeſt to be reclaimed; becauſe he deſpiſes inſtruction, and mocks at the means whereby he ſhould be reformed. It is alſo a moſt horrid ingratitude thus to uſe the

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author of our beings and the patron of our lives; to scoff at and openly defy him, in whom we live, move, and have our being. It is likewise a most heinous and dangerous impiety, to despise him that can destroy us; and oppose him who is infinitely more powerful than we. Will ye, says the apostle, provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye stronger than he? But the sin and folly of this profane temper still farther appears, in that there is not the least temptation to it. When the devil tempts men with riches or honour to ruin themselves, he seems to offer some sort of consideration; but the profane scoffer serves the devil for nought, and sins only for the sake of sinning; he suffers himself to be tempted to the sins of the greatest danger; for no other reward, but the slender reputation of being a wit, and saying what no wise man would dare to say. And what a folly is this, for a man to offend his conscience to please his humour, and only for the sake of a jest, to lose two of the best friends he hath, God, and his own soul? I will now proceed to offer some considerations, to deter men from this impious and dangerous folly of profaneness, which some call wit. And then endeavour to persuade men, to employ that reason and wit which God hath given them, to the service and glory of God.

It is really wonderful how it comes to pass, that some men should be esteemed wits, only for jesting and scoffing at those things, which the greatest part of mankind reverence. A wise man would not speak contemptuously of a great prince, tho' he was out of his dominions; because he remembers that the power and influence of kings many times reach a great way farther than their direct authority. But God is a great king, and in his hands are all the corners of the earth; we can go no where from his spirit, nor can we fly from his

preſence. Wherever we are his eyes ſee us, and his right hand can reach us. Did men truly conſult their own intereſt, ſafety, or reputation, they would never exerciſe their wit in ſuch dangerous matters. Wit is a ſharp weapon, as apt for miſchief as for good, if not well managed. The proper uſe of it, is to ſeaſon converſation, to repreſent things that are praiſe-worthy to the beſt advantage; to expoſe the vices and follies of men, and ſuch things as are truly ridiculous; but if applied to the abuſe of matters the moſt grave and ſerious, it then loſes its commendation. All wit which borders upon profaneneſs, and makes bold with what demands the greateſt reverence, ought to be branded with folly. If we would then preſerve ourſelves from this vice, we muſt take heed how we ſcoff at religion under any form, leſt we inſenſibly bring it into contempt. We muſt not accuſtom ourſelves to a ſlight and irreverent uſe of the name of God; for we may eaſily ſlide into the higheſt degree of profaneneſs, if we do not carefully preſerve a due reverence for his great and glorious name, and an awful regard to the holy ſcriptures; but none are ſo ready to ſcoff at religion, as thoſe who are accuſtomed to common ſwearing.

Let no none then think the worſe of religion becauſe ſome dare to deſpiſe and deride it. The moſt grave and ſerious things in the world are liable to be abuſed. Epictetus obſerves, that every thing hath two handles. By which he means, that there is nothing ſo bad, but may admit of ſome excuſe and extenuation; nor nothing ſo excellent, but a man may find out ſomething, whereby to traduce it. A ſharp wit may diſcover ſomething in the wiſeſt man, whereby to expoſe him to the contempt of judicious people. The graveſt book may be made ridiculous, by applying ſome ſayings in it to a fooliſh purpoſe. For a jeſt may be obtruded upon

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any thing. And therefore no man ought to have the leſs reverence for the principles of religion, or the holy ſcriptures, becauſe idle and profane wits can break jeſts upon them. Nothing is ſo eaſy as to take particular phraſes and expreſſions out of the beſt book in the world, and to abuſe them by putting a forced ridiculous ſenſe upon them. But no wiſe man will think the worſe of a good book for this reaſon, but rather of the man that abuſes it. For ſurely the beſt way is to contemn thoſe who would bring into contempt any thing that is valuable and worthy of praiſe.

Let me then perſuade men to employ that reaſon and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purpoſes; in the ſervice, and to the glory of that God, who hath beſtowed theſe gifts on men. It is the perfection of every thing to attain its true and proper end; and the end of all the gifts that God hath given us, is to glorify the giver. Here is ſubject enough to exerciſe the wit of men and angels; to praiſe that infinite goodneſs, almighty power, and exquiſite wiſdom which made all things, and to admire what we can never ſufficiently praiſe; to vindicate the wiſe and juſt providence of God, in the government of the world; and endeavour to diſcover the beauty and harmony, and reconcile all the ſeeming diſcords and irregularities of the divine adminiſtration; to explain the oracles of the holy ſcriptures, and adore that great myſtery of divine love, which the angels deſire to pry into; God's ſending his only ſon into the world to ſave ſinners, and to give his life a ranſom for them. Theſe would be noble exerciſes for the tongues and pens of the greateſt wits. And ſubjects of this nature are the beſt tryals of our abilities. Satire and invective are the eaſieſt kind of wit; almoſt any degree of it is ſufficient to abuſe and find fault. Wit is a keen inſtrument, and every one can cut and gaſh with it;

but to carve and poliſh a beautiful image, requires great art and ſkill. To praiſe any thing well is an argument of much more wit, than to abuſe. A little wit and a great deal of ill-nature will furniſh a man for ſatire; but the greateſt inſtance of wit, is to commend well. I obſerve this on purpoſe to recommend to men a nobler exerciſe for their wits, and if poſſible to make them aſhamed of that ſcoffing humour, which is ſo eaſy, ſo ill-natured, and not only an enemy to religion, but to every thing that is wiſe and worthy.

It is a melancholy reflection, that in a nation profeſſing Chriſtianity, ſo horrid an impiety as this ſhould dare to appear; and it is time for God to ſhew himſelf, when his being is called in queſtion, and to come and judge the world, when men begin to doubt whether he made it. The ſcripture mentions two things as the forerunners and reaſons of his coming to judgment; infidelity and profane ſcoffing at religion. When the ſon of man come ſhall he find faith on the earth? And one reaſon of the Lord's coming is, to convince ungodly ſinners of all their hard ſpeeches, which they had ſpoken againſt him. And if theſe things be a ſign and reaſon of his coming, I wiſh that we of this age may not have too much cauſe to apprehend the judge to be at the door. But I will now offer a few conſiderations, to ſhew how great the folly is, for men to make a mock at ſin.

As to that higheſt degree of profane mockers, who have no other hope to reſt upon, but that of atheiſm and infidelity, their folly is greater than can be expreſſed in words, or conceived by imagination. For what is the ſtate of ſuch a perſon, when God requires his ſoul? Can he be ſure there is no God? Or can he demonſtrate that there will be no future ſtate? The moſt hardened unbeliever, never yet pretended to prove this. And if he had,

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all his comfort and hopes would be only that of a beaſt, the expectation of periſhing, as if he had never been. But ſince there can be no ſuch demonſtration on the ſide of atheiſm; the conſequent poſſibility on the other ſide, that there may be a God, proves the folly of the profane mocker to be intolerable. The probability that there is a God ſtill encreaſes that folly; the certainty, the demonſtration that there cannot but be a God, ſhews it to be the wickedneſs of folly, even of fooliſhneſs and madneſs. For if there be a God, as the works of nature demonſtrate there is; both reaſon declares and revelation fully confirms, that he will govern the world in righteouſneſs, and in the end judge every man according to his works. That poor objection of the ſcoffers mentioned by St. Peter, that all things hitherto continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, and that therefore they never will be otherwiſe, diſcovers the extreme ſhortneſs of thoſe mens underſtandings, who conſider not, that God with much long-ſuffering gives men ſpace of repentance, and can as eaſily judge the world after a thouſand years as after one day's time. Upon which delay of our Lord's coming, if any wicked ſervant flatters himſelf, that he will not come at all, and upon that aſſurance of impunity, hardens himſelf in his impiety; the Lord of that ſervant will come in a day, when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth. For, as the days before the flood, men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away; even thus ſhall it be in the day. when the ſon of man is revealed. Then ſhall the Lord convince ungodly men of all their hard

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and profane ſpeeches, which they have ſpoken againſt him. And the wicked ſeeing the ſalvation of the righteous, ſhall, with anguiſh of ſpirit, ſay within themſelves, we fools accounted his life madneſs, and his end to be without honour; but now is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the ſaints.

As for thoſe who cannot reaſon themſelves into infidelity, but believe the certainty of a future ſtate, and of a judgment to come; and yet live viciouſly, and continue impenitent, upon a general, looſe and inconſiderate expectation that ſin is leſs dangerous, and God more merciful than the goſpel repreſents him; the folly of making a mock of ſin in this ſenſe, and upon this ground, is to ſhut ones eyes upon the mouth of deſtruction: the folly of this is well reproved in theſe words, My ſon, flee from ſin, as from the face of a ſerpent; for—the teeth thereof are as the teeth of a lion, ſlaying the ſouls of men; and all iniquity is as a two-edged ſword, the wounds whereof cannot be healed. To imagine that God will be pleaſed with an empty form of godlineſs, and accept a zeal for meer names and diſtinctions of religion, without true virtue and true holineſs of life, is to be ſo fooliſh, as to think God more eaſily deceived than mortal men; and that the ſearcher of hearts will be impoſed upon, with an outward profeſſion of ſervice, which even an earthly ſuperior would with indignation reject. Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous. The vain hope of thoſe who rely on any other foundation, is thus elegantly deſcribed. The hope of the ungodly is like duſt that is blown away with the wind; like a thin froth, that is driven away with the ſtorm; like as the ſmoke which is diſperſed here and there with the tempeſt; and paſſeth away as the remembrance of a gueſt, that tarrieth but a day: But the righteous live for

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evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the most high." Lastly,

As to those who are truly sensible of the indispensable necessity of a virtuous life, and yet at the present speak peace to themselves, in the practice of unrighteousness, and the enjoyment of unlawful pleasures, with a view to repent and amend hereafter; the folly of making a mock at sin in this sense, is the madness of playing with death, and sporting with destruction. It is the folly of letting slip opportunities which probably may never be retrieved. It is the folly of provoking God to cut us off in his wrath, and to assign us our portion among hypocrites and unbelievers. It is the folly of rendering a man's self more and more incapable of doing that, which is of absolute necessity, not to be left undone. For except we do effectually repent and amend, and that speedily, so as to bring forth the fruits of the spirit, we shall inevitably perish. And yet the longer any man continues in sin, the more difficult it will be to leave it off. For he grows hardened at length, thro' the deceitfulness of sin, and by being long accustomed to do evil, it becomes in a manner as difficult for him to learn to do well, as for the "Ethiopian to change his skin, "or the leopard his spots." But I would fain hope that men will pity themselves, and repent, and give glory to God, and know in this their day, the things that belong to their peace. Which God grant, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

Diſcourſe CXIII. Abp. *Sharp.*

Of APOSTACY, and the SIN unto DEATH.

Heb. x. 26, 27.

For if we ſin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſaries.

THESE words have terrified many perſons, becauſe they ſeem ſo ſevere againſt all thoſe who have been wilful ſinners after baptiſm, and which indeed is the caſe of moſt Chriſtians; as to give little hopes of obtaining the forgiveneſs and favour of God, even after their beſt repentance. It may therefore be of great ſervice, to endeavour to give ſome ſatisfaction to ſuch ſcrupulous minds, as are in any perplexity and trouble on this account. In order to this, I ſhall enquire, what it is to ſin wilfully; what ſort of wilful ſin the apoſtle here means; and in what ſenſe there remains no more ſatisfaction for ſin, but a fearful looking for of judgment.

Sins are generally diſtinguiſhed into three ſorts; ſins of ignorance, of infirmity, and of wilfulneſs; anſwerable to the three diſtinct prime faculties or powers of the ſoul of man, from which all actions flow; namely, the underſtanding, the will, and the ſenſual appetites or affections. When we do any ſinful action, that faculty of theſe three denominates

minates the ſin, from whoſe fault or irregularity the action doth chiefly proceed; for it is certain, that in every ſin a man commits, all the three faculties do in ſome degree concur. If the underſtanding by not rightly apprehending its duty, be moſt in fault, then the ſin ſo committed is a ſin of ignorance; tho' it may alſo have ſomewhat of infirmity and wilfulneſs in it. Thus as to St. Paul in perſecuting the church, it was the want of underſtanding, the error of his judgment, that chiefly miſled him, and not any malice in his will or corruption in his affections; and therefore he calls this action of his, a ſin of ignorance. But if the main fault be in the affections; thro' ſome ſudden paſſion, either blinding or corrupting the judgment, by fear, anger, or deſire; the ſin ariſing from hence, tho' joined with ſome degree of ignorance and wilfulneſs, is yet properly a ſin of infirmity. Such was Peter's denying of Chriſt. His underſtanding was not in fault, for he very well knew what he did. Nor was the fault ſo much in his will, as to make it properly a wilful ſin; for he did not deny our Saviour out of malice, nay, he reſolved not to do it. And even honoured him with his heart, when he denied him with his tongue. But the fault was in his affections. It was fear that ſurprized his ſoul, when he ſaw his maſter ſo deſpitefully uſed before his face; which made him afraid to own him, not knowing how to avoid the preſent danger he was in. So that St. Peter's denial, was properly a ſin of infirmity. But where the underſtanding is competently informed with knowledge, and not much tranſported with any violent ſudden paſſion, ſo that the blame muſt be imputed to the will, which is reſolutely bent upon the evil action; the ſin hence ariſing, tho' perhaps not free from ſome mixture of ignorance and infirmity, is yet properly a wilful, preſumptuous ſin. And ſuch was the ſin of David in

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contriving the death of Uriah. For he could not pretend ignorance, nor paſſion, having time enough to conſider what he was about. He did the fact with deliberation, and full conſent of his own will; which made it a wilful, preſumptuous ſin.

An accurate caſuiſt thus defines a wilful ſin. When a man, ſufficiently convinced in his underſtanding, that the thing he would do, is unlawful and diſpleaſing to God; or, at leaſt hath ſufficient means to convince him, if he be not wilfully wanting to himſelf, in the uſe thereof: and hath beſides time to adviſe with himſelf, to examine the caſe and every circumſtance of it, and to apply the light of his underſtanding thereunto; and yet when all is done, (contrary to the dictates of his own reaſon, and the checks of his conſcience) goes on to put his wicked intentions into act, and to fulfil his own will, notwithſtanding the apparent inconformity thereof, to the will of God; this is a wilful ſin.——I now proceed to enquire, whether theſe words, that if we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more ſatisfaction for ſin, is to be underſtood of all wilful ſins committed after baptiſm, and our profeſſing of Chriſtianity; or, that the apoſtle here only ſpeaks of one kind of wilful ſins.

To this I anſwer, that the apoſtle's meaning does not extend to all wilful ſins, committed after baptiſm, but is reſtrained to one ſort of them; becauſe otherwiſe, this aſſertion could not be reconciled with abundance of plain texts, in both the old and new teſtament. Indeed, ſo long as any one lives in a courſe of known wilful ſin, he cannot hope for the favour of God, or preſume to be in a ſtate of ſalvation. But then the ſcripture aſſures us, that there ſtill remains a ſacrifice for ſuch ſinful acts and habits; God calls upon them to repent, and offers them his grace, if they will embrace it. How frequently

quently does God by his prophets call, exhort, and invite even wilful and obstinate sinners to repentance; promising them pardon and acceptance, if they will leave their evil ways, and turn to him; and even such sinners as were under his covenant, who had sinned after they had received the knowledge of the truth? For God declares universally to all sinners, that whenever a wicked man will turn from his wickedness that he hath committed, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. We have many instances and examples of those that have found mercy from God, after their falling into great and sinful crimes. As David after his commission of murder and adultery; Solomon after a course of debauchery and idolatry; Manasses after a long life of horrid impieties. Nor are the gates of repentance and mercy more shut up to offending sinners in the new testament, under the gospel, than in the old, under the law. For, if we are to forgive our brother seventy times seven, should he so often sin against us; we may certainly expect the same mercy from God, if we sin against him: because he hath declared, that our dealings towards our brother, shall be the measure of his towards us. But our Saviour's kindness to the souls of those who even fell from their duty, after they knew it, and the means he useth to bring them to repentance, and his readiness to pardon them, if they do repent, sufficiently appear from the parable of the prodigal son: who, after he had consumed the portion given him, upon harlots and riotous living, was by his father, upon his return, received to favour, with all possible expressions of joy; even to the discontent of his other son, who had not displeased him. The same is also signified by the parable of the man and the lost sheep; who leaves the ninety and nine, to seek for that which was lost, and when he had found it, calls his neighbours to

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rejoice with him. And "more joy will be in heaven "over one ſinner that repenteth, than over ninety-"nine juſt perſons, that want no repentance."

Should any object, that theſe encouragements are given to ſinners, only upon their firſt embracing of Chriſt's religion; and are not to be extended to thoſe who wilfully ſin after baptiſm: To this I anſwer, that ſuch an interpretation muſt do violence to the parable. For it ſhould be obſerved, that the prodigal ſpoken of is not a ſtranger, but a ſon; and the ſheep that goes aſtray, was not without an owner; ſo that we muſt expound this prodigal and loſt ſheep in the parable, of thoſe perſons, who after they become the ſons of God by regeneration of water and the ſpirit, and are admitted into the fold of our great ſhepherd Jeſus Chriſt, do abuſe God's grace, and abandon themſelves to evil courſes, contrary to their profeſſion. But that this text doth not ſpeak of all wilful ſins committed after baptiſm, or the profeſſion of Chriſtianity is plain, becauſe the ſinning wilfully here ſpoken of, can be meant only of ſuch ſins, as whoever commits them, doth tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and doth deſpite to the ſpirit of grace. For ſo St. Paul deſcribes the wilful ſin here ſpoken of. But I think and hope it would be untrue to affirm, that any act of wilful ſin, or habit of vice, that Chriſtians are ordinarily guilty of, can be charged with ſo high a crime, as theſe expreſſions ſeem to imply. We may therefore juſtly conclude, that it is not all wilful ſins that St. Paul means, when he ſaith, "there re-"mains no more ſacrifice for ſuch;" but only one particular kind of wilful ſins, which ſhall be my next enquiry.

The wilful ſin then that the apoſtle here ſpeaks of, is no other than an apoſtacy from the faith of Chriſt, a renouncing of Chriſtianity; not thro' ſome ſudden

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ſurpriſe or fear, and then returning to it again; but a continued, obſtinate deſertion of it. A revolting to judaiſm, or heatheniſm, and becoming the adverſaries of Chriſt and his religion. And the occaſion of theſe words naturally leads us to this ſenſe. The apoſtle bids us "hold the profeſſion of our faith without wavering, not forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together, as the manner of ſome is, but exhorting one another." And the reaſon he gives for this, is, "For if we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a fearful looking for of judgment." Hence it is evident, that the apoſtle's deſign is to perſuade the jewiſh Chriſtians to perſevere in their religion, notwithſtanding all the perſecutions that threatned them on that account; and to caution them againſt forſaking the Chriſtian aſſemblies, and becoming Jews or Heathens, as ſome had done. And the argument uſed to enforce this exhortation, is, "that there remaineth no more ſacrifice for their ſins," if they were guilty of renouncing the faith, but only a fearful expectation of judgment. For the frequenting the Chriſtian aſſemblies was the only evidence they could give of their being Chriſtians. And the following words of the ſame apoſtle, add a farther probability to this expoſition. "Whoſoever deſpiſed Moſes his law, died without mercy, under two or three witneſſes. Of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and done deſpite to the ſpirit of grace?" The deſpiſers of Moſes his law, alluded to by the apoſtle, were thoſe that renounced the covenant of Moſes, into which they had entered; and went over to the idolaters, to worſhip the ſun, moon and ſtars. Wherefore the wilful ſinners

here compared with them, muſt be ſuch as were apoſtates from Chriſtianity, as the others were from Judaiſm; or otherwiſe the apoſtle's diſcourſe will not be conſiſtent. If we thus underſtand theſe words, then the difficulty of them is cleared up.

The laſt thing to be inquired into, is, what the apoſtle means, when he ſays, "That to thoſe who ſin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, to conſume the adverſary." Theſe words do not imply, that the ſin here ſpoken of is unpardonable, and not to be forgiven; but only, that to ſuch as ſin wilfully, there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin. That is, they muſt not expect another Chriſt to die for them; and yet notwithſtanding, they may upon repentance have the benefit of that ſacrifice, which was once offered for all the ſins of the whole world. There is no one ſin nor the habit of any ſin, of ever ſo damning a nature, but that upon repentance and change of life, the ſinner may hope for pardon and acceptance. For if a man is in a capacity of repenting, his ſin, is capable of being forgiven. But the principal import of theſe words, is the miſerable condition into which all that ſin wilfully, by renouncing their Chriſtianity, do bring themſelves. For hereby they forfeit all their right and title to the benefit of the goſpel covenant, to the pardon of their ſins, and the promiſe of eternal life; becauſe there is but one ſacrifice, that of Chriſt upon the croſs, by which pardon of ſin is to be obtained, and eternal life to be hoped for. But this ſacrifice they have utterly diſclaimed and rejected; looking upon the death of Chriſt as a puniſhment juſtly due to him, as being an impoſtor. So that if we once renounce our great ſacrifice, there remains no more for ſin. If we reject that, there is nothing left, but a fear-

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ful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, to consume such offenders.

But besides the dreadful condition of those who are guilty of renouncing their Christianity, there is farther implied in the text, the great difficulty and moral impossibility of recovering such persons out of such a sad state. For the nature of this sin is such, as to render men incapable of using the means, whereby to obtain a pardon. Whatever other sin a man commits, so long as he preserves his faith, there may be some hopes of him, that he may again by God's grace, be restored to his favour by repentance. But when a man renounceth his Christianity, tho' it is not impossible for him to be recovered, yet it is hardly to be expected; because there is no means of salvation but by Christ, and this he disclaims and renounces. So that morally speaking, there is nothing left for such an apostate, but a dreadful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume him. This apostle elsewhere speaks to the same purpose. "It is impossible, saith he, for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame." The falling away here, is the same thing as a wilful departure from Christianity; and it is impossible to renew such apostates to repentance. The apostle does not mean an absolute, but a moral impossibility; and in the same sense that our Saviour saith, "it is "impossible for a rich man to enter into the king-"dom of heaven." That is, it is very hard for a rich man to do this. Thus it is impossible for them to do good, that have accustomed themselves to do evil. That is, it is extremely difficult, and not

eaſily effected. For tho' God may reſcue ſuch an apoſtate out of the devil's hand, yet he has no where promiſed it; nay he has threatned that he will not.

Thus have I given a plain account of this difficult text, in which there is nothing that needs to terrify any well diſpoſed perſon; tho' they may have been guilty of many wilful ſins ſince their baptiſm, and coming to the knowledge of the truth. Nay, the greateſt ſinner ought not to deſpair of God's mercy, if they will but repent. For there is nothing in this text to diſcourage the hopes of any man's repentance, be his ſins ever ſo great, ſo long as he continues in the profeſſion of Chriſtianity. But then let all ſeriouſly conſider, that tho' there may be hopes of a man's repentance, however wicked he is, ſo long as he adheres to the religion of Chriſt; yet there is little hope for thoſe, who having been baptized in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, afterwards depart from the faith, and turn atheiſts or deiſts, or who renounce their Chriſtianity: becauſe ſuch do in the apoſtle's ſenſe trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing.

I proceed to conſider another paſſage of ſcripture, which occaſions many fears and ſcruples to ſome timorous and melancholy perſons; I mean this that follows. "If any man ſee his brother ſin "a ſin, which is not unto death, he ſhall aſk, and he "ſhall give him life for them that ſin not unto death. "There is a ſin unto death: I do not ſay that he "ſhall pray for it." The difficulty of theſe words lies in what is meant by the ſin unto death. And that we are not to pray for it. A ſin unto death then, may be called ſo in two reſpects. Firſt, as to the preſent danger of death to the ſinner, tho' it may not prove fatal. And thus every wilful preſumptuous ſin, every habit or cuſtom of wilful ſin, is a ſin unto death. That is, ſuch ſins and habits

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put a man into a ſtate of death, and deſtroy his title to everlaſting happineſs. But then they are not deadly to all; for tho' the effect and conſequence of ſin prove to ſome ſinners eternal death, yet to others this conſequence is prevented by a timely repentance. So that in this ſenſe, the ſin unto death here mentioned, means thoſe great and capital ſins, which whoſoever lives in them ſhall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Such are adultery, fornication, idolatry, murder, covetouſneſs, extortion, drunkenneſs, hatred, malice and the like. On the other ſide, the ſin not unto death, and to which the ſin unto death is oppoſed, muſt be meant, thoſe frailties, infirmities, and interruptions of piety, which tho' properly ſins, yet are conſiſtent with a ſtate of grace and regeneration, and deſtroy not a man's hope of happineſs in the other world, tho' he never obtains an entire victory over them. Again,

A ſin may be called a ſin unto death, where the conſequence of it is certain death to the ſinner. When the courſe of ſin is not only mortal, but doth really damn the man that is guilty of it, this is truly, and in the moſt proper ſenſe, a ſin unto death. By this notion no man can ſin unto death, but he whoſe ſins are never pardoned. And every one doth ſin the ſin unto death, be his crimes what they will, who dies without repentance. So that what is a ſin unto death in one man may not be ſo in another. Becauſe one man's murder, adultery, idolatry, or the like, may be damnable to him, tho' not to another, guilty of the ſame, becauſe he repents of them, and God may pardon him. But this can only be known to God. Thus I have given the two general ſenſes, in which a ſin may be called a ſin unto death. Bot the great queſtion remains, how we are to underſtand the ſin unto death here mentioned, that we are diſcouraged praying for? To this I anſwer in the following particulars:

That to interpret the ſin unto death, of all grievous preſumptuous ſins, or habits of ſin, that unrepented of deſtroy ſalvation, which is the firſt notion I gave of it; doth not ſeem to agree with St. John's meaning. Nor can it be reconciled with the conſtant practice of the Chriſtian church, which not only prays for ſeveral ſuch ſinners, but admits them to communion upon their repentance. And to take the ſin unto death for every ſuch ſin or ſins, which might have been pardoned to the ſinner, had he made uſe of God's grace for repentance, yet hath not been pardoned, but the ſinner dies in his ſin; ſuch an interpretation has this great inconvenience in it, that it renders the apoſtle's injunction, about praying for ſinners, wholly impracticable. For, according to this notion, none can know, as I before obſerved, but God only, what are ſins unto death, and what not. Since the event alone makes the difference. But the apoſtle ſuppoſes that a man may know what is a ſin unto death, and what is not ſo. Otherwiſe he would not have given us different rules for our prayers, as to the one or the other. Therefore the interpretation of the ſin unto death, which I think moſt probable, is this. To take the ſin unto death, for ſome groſs wilful deadly ſin, that unrepented of deſtroys ſalvation; but not to extend it to all ſuch ſins, but only to one particular ſort of them: juſt as the ſinning wilfully in St. Paul, for which there remains no more ſacrifice, is not every wilful ſin committed after baptiſm, but only one ſort, as I have before ſhewn. Which particular kind of ſin unto death, moſt probably, if all things be conſidered, is the very ſame ſin, with St. Paul's wilful ſin; I mean, a renouncing of Chriſtianity, and the communion of the church, and going over to the enemies of it. My reaſon for this aſſertion is this:

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The apostle thro' this whole epistle endeavours to keep the jewish Christians firm to the faith, and to the Christian assemblies, from which many had departed; denying that Jesus is the Christ. In order to this, he labours to prove, that whatever boasts these deserters might make, of obtaining eternal life by their way; yet eternal life was only to be had by believing in Christ, and holding communion with his church. This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.---These things have I written to you, that believe on the name of the Son of God; and that ye may know ye have eternal life, seeing ye believe on the name of the Son of God. And therefore it is, that the name of life is so often given to our Saviour by this apostle. Thus speaking of Jesus, he says, the "life was manifested. This is the "true God and eternal life. He that hath the son, "hath the life; but he that hath not the son, hath "not the life." Hence it is reasonable to believe, that when the apostle speaks of being in death, and a sin unto death, he means those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, or that renounce the Christian societies, and go either to the antichrist, or the heathen idolaters, against whom he cautions them. "Little children keep yourselves from idols." I proceed to enquire, what the apostle means, when having told us, there is a sin unto death, he adds; "I do not say that a man shall pray for it."

It is certain, that these words do not prohibit our praying for those, who have sinned the sin unto death. The utmost they can be extended to is, "I "do not bid you to pray for it;" but there is a great difference between the not bidding us to do a thing, and forbidding the doing. However, that all may the better understand the true meaning of these words of St. John, I will give a brief paraphrase of it, according to what I have before observed.

And I take the ſenſe of the whole paſſage to be to this effect.

If any ſee a Chriſtian fall into ſin, he is not to be deſpaired of, becauſe he is under the means of grace, and the mercies of the covenant. On the contrary, good Chriſtians, and the officers of the church, are to intercede with God, for ſuch a ſinner; and no doubt, but upon their prayers in the name of Chriſt, God will afford him ſuch a meaſure of grace, as, with his own endeavours, will be ſufficient to obtain his pardon. This benefit all who adhere to Chriſt's religion have above others; that tho' we ſin, there is means provided for our recovery. As for thoſe who deny the Lord that brought them, and fall away, either to the jewiſh antichriſts, or the heathen idolaters, there is not the ſame hopes nor encouragement for ſucceſs to the prayers of others for them. For ſince they have renounced the Son of God, in whom alone life is to be had, they muſt needs be concluded under death. Therefore you cannot be ſo confident that God will hear your prayers for ſuch apoſtates, becauſe their caſe is more dangerous, and their cure more difficult.

It appears then, that it is not only lawful, but a very charitable and pious thing, to pray for all ſorts of ſinners, even the greateſt. St. Paul exhorts, that prayers, and ſupplications, and interceſſions, be made for all men, without diſtinction; and our bleſſed Saviour prayed for thoſe that crucified him; ſome of which were doubtleſs thoſe very Phariſees whom he had before charged with committing the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Certainly there is no ſinner in ſo bad and deplorable a condition, but we may pray for him; nay, charity obliges us to it. And if our prayers are not available for him, yet they will be beneficial to ourſelves.

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From what has been obſerved, we may raiſe matter of comfort and ſatisfaction to many weak Chriſtians. There are too many, partly thro' melancholy and an ill habit of body, partly thro' the terrors of an awakened conſcience, joined with miſunderſtanding theſe and ſome other places of ſcripture, who are apt to conclude, that they have ſinned the ſin unto death; and that conſequently no prayers either of their own, or other good Chriſtians, will be available for them: or, that they have committed the wilful ſin, for which there remains no more ſacrifice: or, that they are fallen from grace, and ſo cannot be renewed by repentance: or, laſtly, that they have committed the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. As for this laſt ſin, I ſhall treat of it in the next diſcourſe. But for the others, I hope it well appears, that thoſe I am now ſpeaking of, are no ways concerned in them. For I ſuppoſe the perſons who have theſe apprehenſions, do profeſs Chriſtianity, and have not fallen from it; tho' poſſibly they may have been guilty of many great ſins. They have never renounced their Lord and maſter, or turned apoſtates from his religion; tho' their lives and practices may not have been in all reſpects ſo ſuitable as their profeſſion required. If this be the caſe, then I think it is very evident, that they cannot be guilty of the crimes mentioned in theſe texts. That is, they have neither ſinned the wilful ſin, nor fallen away after having been enlightened; nor ſinned the ſin unto death: Since theſe crimes import no leſs nor more than apoſtacy from the Chriſtian religion to atheiſm or heatheniſm, or ſome other religion contrary to the Chriſtian. Laſtly,

But let no man, becauſe he hath not ſinned the ſin unto death, encourage himſelf in any evil courſe or habit of ſin, tho' it ſeems never ſo ſlight and excuſable to him. There are many ways of going to hell,

hell, beſides the ſins I have been treating of. Every wilful ſin, or habit of ſin, continued in, be there never ſo many apologies made for it, from temper, conſtitution, buſineſs and intereſt; all ſuch ſins, if perſiſted in, will as certainly deſtroy a man's ſalvation as the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Let no man therefore indulge himſelf in any evil courſe that God's law hath declared againſt, in hopes that it will be eaſily paſſed by, becauſe it is not thoſe enormous crimes that have a mark of infamy put upon them; ſince any known ſin, encouraged and perſiſted in, and never repented of, may prove as fatal to a man's ſoul, as a torrent of open impieties. Nor let no man allow himſelf in any evil courſe, in confidence that he hath not yet ſinned, beyond a probability of pardon, or in proſpect that he may hereafter repent. This is the utmoſt preſumption on God's mercy, and the only way to provoke God to withdraw his grace, and to give us up to hardneſs of heart, and a final impenitency. And when it comes to that, our eternal ſtate is concluded; and we have indeed ſinned a ſin unto death in one ſenſe, and no prayers or interceſſions will be available.

Diſcourſe CXIV. Abp. *Sharp.*

Of the SIN againſt the HOLY GHOST.

Mat. xii. 31.

Wherefore I ſay unto you, all manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men, but the blaſphemy of the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven unto men.

IT is my preſent deſign to explain the nature of that ſin, which we commonly call the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; the difficulty of rightly underſtanding it having created much trouble of mind and perplexity of thought to ſome well meaning people. There are many ſins againſt the Holy Ghoſt; "whoſoever grieveth or quencheth the "ſpirit," ſinneth againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Ananias and Sapphira lyed againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Simon Magus, in offering to purchaſe the gift of the ſpirit with money, committed a ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. But none of theſe ſeem to be the ſin, which by way of eminence we call the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. The not obſerving this diſtinction has occaſioned many miſtakes with reſpect to this ſin. For the better finding out what this ſin is, we muſt take the ſcriptures, and them only, for our guide. The neglect of this, is another reaſon why men have given ſuch different definitions of this ſin. There is no text in the epiſtles of the new teſtament, that doth in expreſs words mention it. As for the evangeliſts, there are three, who each of them ſpeak once of it, and upon the ſame occaſion.

ſion. Of theſe three, I have fixed upon the largeſt and fulleſt in the text, and ſhall endeavour to give a particular account of it.

And firſt, I will give an account of the great ſin here ſpoken of, which we call the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Now, tho' we call it the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, yet the text does not ſtile it by that name; but gives it ſuch a name, as to inſtruct us to what a particular kind of ſins we are to reduce it; that is, "blaſphemy, or ſpeaking reproachful "words againſt another." We may obſerve, that it is no where called the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, neither in the text, nor in either of the two goſpels, but always the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, or ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which is the ſame thing. For to blaſpheme, is to ſpeak againſt another. To blaſpheme, is uſed not only with reſpect to God, but to other perſons, and imports neither more nor leſs than ſlander, calumny, or evil ſpeeches, againſt whomſoever they are ſpoken. And where we tranſlate "ſpeaking evil of "dignities, in the Greek it is blaſpheming of dig-"nities." And where our tranſlators render, theſe men ſpeak evil of things, in the Greek it is blaſpheme things. Thus St. Paul commands, that Chriſtians ſhould ſpeak evil of no man. In the Greek it is, that they ſhall blaſpheme no man. And there are many other inſtances of this kind. So that the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt doth plainly conſiſt in blaſphemy, or calumny, or ſlanderous words. That which remains then is to diſcover what kind of blaſphemy it is, that is here called the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and this we ſhall eaſily find out by having recourſe to the context.

The occaſion of theſe words in the text was this. Our Saviour having caſt a devil out of a man, that was blind and dumb, ſo that he could perfectly ſee

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and ſpeak; the people, amazed at this great miracle, concluded that Jeſus was the Meſſiah, the Chriſt, the ſon of David. The Phariſees, to hinder perſons from becoming his diſciples, maliciouſly gave out, that tho' Jeſus did caſt out devils, yet he did this, not by any divine power, but merely by the power of Belzebub, the prince of the devils. Our Saviour, to obviate and remove this reflection, endeavours to ſhew how groundleſs this their ſlander and calumny was; and to convince them of the grievouſneſs of the ſin, and greatneſs of the puniſhment they brought on themſelves, by thus ſcandalizing his miracles, in ſaying, "they were done by "the power of the devil;" he offers three reaſons or arguments ſufficient to convince any reaſonable man, that his miracles could not be wrought by the devil, but by the ſpirit of God.

The firſt was, that it was entirely againſt the intereſt of the devil's kingdom to maintain and allow diviſions among themſelves, or that one devil ſhould eject another; for this was the way to ruin that kingdom. Secondly, they had no more reaſon to ſay he caſt out devils by Belzebub, than to ſay it of thoſe of their own people or diſciples, who either did, or pretended to caſt out devils, in the name of the God of Abraham, of Iſaac, and of Jacob. But thirdly, which was a demonſtrative argument, it plainly appears both from the deſign of Chriſt's miracles, and the tendency of his doctrines, that he was ſo far from working them by any confederacy of the devil, that Chriſt was the greateſt enemy the devil had. For he was his ſuperior and overcame him, binding the ſtrong man, ſpoiling his houſe, and doing all the miſchief he could to his kingdom. And having thus by theſe three arguments vindicated himſelf from their ſlanders, he proceeds to teſtify againſt their ſin, and to warn them of the puniſhment that attended it, in the words

words of the text. Wherefore I ſay unto you, all manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men, but the blaſphemy of the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven unto men. As if he had ſaid, your charge againſt me is groundleſs, you having no reaſon to ſay, "that I caſt out devils by "the help of the devil;" for even you yourſelves are convinced that you ſlander my work, (for our Saviour knew their thoughts) and if ye will ſpeak according to your hearts, you muſt confeſs they are true miracles, and done by the ſpirit of God. And ſince this is your caſe, conſider what a grievous crime you are guilty of, in thus vilifying the good ſpirit of God, and calling him a devil. "All other ſins and blaſphemies ſhall be forgiven "unto men, but this blaſphemy of yours, is of ſo "horrible a nature, that whoever is guilty of it, "ſhall never be forgiven, but is in danger of eter-"nal damnation."

This being the true meaning of our Saviour's diſcourſe, it is evident, that the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and ſpeaking againſt him, wholly related to the Phariſees; and that this blaſphemy and ſpeaking againſt the ſpirit, was in fact their aſſerting that our Saviour caſt out devils, and performed his other miracles by Belzebub; or, that it was an impure ſpirit that did theſe works, than which there could not be a greater blaſphemy of the Holy Ghoſt. And this is yet more clear in this paſſage of our Saviour. That all other ſins and blaſphemies ſhall be forgiven unto men, but he that blaſphemeth againſt the Holy Ghoſt, hath never forgiveneſs, but is in danger of eternal damnation. "Becauſe, (ſaith he) the Phariſees ſaid, he had an "unclean ſpirit." If any aſk why this calumny of the Phariſees ſhould be rather ſtiled a blaſphemy againſt our Saviour than the Holy Ghoſt; the reaſon is, that all miracles and extraordinary works, whether

ther performed by the prophets, or by our Saviour or his apoſtles, are in ſcripture conſtantly attributed to the Holy Spirit, as the effects of his power and operation; and therefore to ſay, that our Saviour's miracles were done by the devil, was an immediate affront to the Holy Ghoſt, who wrought them. Our Saviour ſays, "that every idle word that men "ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof, "at the day of judgment." That is, all falſe and ſcandalous words. And if we ſhall be called to a ſevere account for every ſlander and calumny that we vent againſt others; much more muſt we expect this, when we calumniate and ſlander the Holy Ghoſt, by aſcribing his works to Belzebub.

But I proceed to ſhew, what is meant by thoſe leſſer ſins, here oppoſed to the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; which ſhall be forgiven unto men, tho' the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not. Theſe are all manner of ſin and blaſphemy; and in particular ſpeaking a word againſt the ſon of man; which ſhall be forgiven unto men. As for the firſt, "all manner of ſin and blaſphemy," means no more, than all manner of affronts and ſlanders committed againſt others. This ſeems to be the right interpretation, becauſe our Saviour is not here ſpeaking of any ſins, but ſlander and blaſphemy. And his deſign was to ſhew how much the ſlander and blaſphemy of the Holy Ghoſt exceeded all other ſlanders in guilt. And as for that other leſſer ſin, "ſpeaking a word againſt the ſon of man;" that is, againſt Jeſus Chriſt, it means, to talk ſlightingly and reproachfully of him; as calling him a glutton, or wine-bibber, as ſeveral of the Jews did. So that what our Saviour ſaid, is to this effect. I ſay unto you, that all manner of ſlanders and blaſphemy, wherewith men ſlander others, ſhall be forgiven them, but the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven them. And whoever

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ſlanders or ſpeaks evil of me, who am a prophet ſent from God, by diſparaging either my perſon, or my doctrine, even this ſhall be forgiven him. But whoever ſpeaks againſt the miracles that I do, and ſaith they are done by the power of the devil, this is ſo horrid a blaſphemy, that it ſhall never be forgiven him, either in this world or the other.

And the reaſon why ſpeaking againſt the miracles of our Saviour, is of ſo heinous and damning a nature, above all other blaſphemies, is, becauſe the miracles our Saviour wrought, were the principal evidence that he gave, or could give, of his being ſent from God, and conſequently the great means of converting mankind to his religion. And therefore to ſpeak againſt them, and attribute them to the power of the devil, was the moſt ſpiteful, malicious and miſchievous blaſphemy that could be committed; becauſe it was the only effectual way to hinder people from believing on him, and conſequently to defeat all God's gracious ends of bringing men to ſalvation by the goſpel, than which the devil himſelf could not do worſe.

I proceed to conſider the importance of theſe words, "that it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither "in this world, nor in the world to come." What our Saviour ſeems to mean here, is, that this ſin of the blaſphemy of the Holy Ghoſt, ſhall be ſeverely puniſhed, both in this world and the next. The phraſe by which he expreſſeth it, was familiar to thoſe he ſpoke to. It was a received notion among the Jews, that for ſome ſins, a man was pardoned upon his repentance; other ſins were not pardoned till the ſolemn day of expiation, which came once a year; and other greater ſins were not to be expiated, but by ſome great temporal affliction. But yet all ſins that could not be pardoned theſe ways, were expiated by death, ſuppoſing the man was an Iſraelite. To this opinion of theirs our Saviour ſeems

seems to allude. As if he had said, "This blasphemy and open affront that you put upon the spirit of God, is a crime of so high a nature, that it shall not be expiated either in this life, or at your death; but those that are guilty of it shall have a miserable portion, both in this world and that which is to come." This seems to be the full importance of this expression.

There are some who ask whether the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is absolutely unpardonable. But this is an enquiry more curious than necessary, because it no way concerns us; who cannot be supposed to have sinned against the Holy Ghost, nor yet be capable of doing it. However, it may not be amiss to give some satisfaction to timorous and scrupulous persons, leaving it to every one to receive or reject what is offered. And it is the opinion of several most eminent and learned divines, that our Saviour's words are not to be taken in an absolute, but in a comparative sense; and that when he says "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men;" he means no more than that all other sins and blasphemies shall sooner be forgiven, than this against the Holy Ghost. So that according to this sense, which I confess I think to be the true one, our Savionr does not here speak either of the pardonableness of some sins, or the unpardonableness of others; but only comparatively, of the much greater danger and difficulty of obtaining pardon for the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost than for any other blasphemy.

But if we suppose the sense of them to be, that all other calumnies and blasphemies may be forgiven unto men, but that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven unto men; yet even then let it be observed, that it does not from thence follow, that there is any sin that shall not be pardoned

upon repentance. For it is a certain truth, that there is no ſuch great ſin, but if the ſinner do ſincerely repent, he may hope for mercy at God's hands. And if he who is guilty of the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, do not, or ſhall not find mercy, it is purely becauſe he doth not, or cannot repent of it. That is, when a man is come to ſuch a high degree of malice, impudence and obſtinacy in ſinning, that he dares affront the Holy Ghoſt, by aſcribing his works to the devil; it is juſt in God to deny that perſon ſuch grace as may be neceſſary to his repentance and pardon; and to leave him without remedy, in the condition he hath brought himſelf into. And upon this ſuppoſition only it is, that the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt is unpardonable. But this is alſo the caſe of other ſinners, who have not committed this ſin. Many perſons may have ſinned ſo long and obſtinately, that God may have forſaken them before they die, and the ſins of ſuch ſhall never be forgiven, becauſe they ſhall never repent.

So that the unpardonableneſs of the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, is no bar to our exhorting and encouraging all ſorts of perſons to repentance, even the greateſt ſinners; nor yet any hindrance to their hopes of pardon, if they do repent; no more than is the guilt of any other heinous ſin. We may ſafely promiſe pardon to all true penitents, for all ſins whatſoever without exception. "God did not, (ſaith Athanaſius) ſay to him that blaſphemes and repents, it ſhall not be forgiven; but to him that blaſphemes and remains in his blaſphemy. For there is no ſin that God will not pardon to them that worthily repent." To this I farther add, that thoſe words of our Saviour, taking them even in their rigorous ſenſe, doth not exclude all who ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, from all poſſibility of repentance, nor of obtaining pardon. For there are ſeveral

degrees

degrees of blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt. This ſin of blaſphemy may be aggravated, with more knowledge, wilfulneſs, and malice in ſome than in others; and thoſe who are leſs ſinful are greater objects of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveneſs. And the very perſons that our Saviour charges with the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and who afterwards crucified him; our Saviour prays, that the ſin of theſe might be forgiven; and to whom alſo St. Peter afterwards preached, and called upon to waſh away their ſin by baptiſm and repentance. Which ſhews that the caſe of all were not deſperate, but that ſome might repent and be forgiven. Having thus explained the difficulties in the text, I will next enquire, whether Chriſtians can now be guilty of this blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt? And what are the ſins that come neareſt to it? And this enquiry is the more neceſſary, becauſe ſeveral perſons are apt to fancy that they are guilty of this unpardonable ſin. And,

If we take the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt preciſely as our Saviour here ſpeaks of it, no man now living can poſſibly be guilty thereof; becauſe no one can be in thoſe circumſtances that they were, whom he charged it upon; and who, tho' eye-witneſſes of his miracles, and had the greateſt evidence of the truth of them, yet they attributed them to ſorcery and witchcraft. So that none but thoſe that lived then, can be guilty of this blaſphemy. And it is impoſſible for one who profeſſeth Chriſtianity, as long as he does ſo, to commit this crime. For whoever profeſſeth Chriſtianity, let him be never ſo wicked otherwiſe, yet as he pretends or profeſſes to believe the true religion, and that Chriſt was a true prophet, he cannot at the ſame time ſay, that Chriſt was an impoſtor, and wrought miracles by the power of the devil, which, as I before obſerved, is the only blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, men-

tioned in the goſpel. But any man who believes there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus, that he preached ſuch doctrine, led ſuch a life, wrought ſuch miracles, as he is recorded to have done; and yet, contrary to his own conviction, ſaith, that this Jeſus did theſe extraordinary works by the power of the devil; or doth aſcribe the mighty works done by the apoſtles and the firſt Chriſtians, to the power of the devil: Such a man hath blaſphemed the Holy Ghoſt in the ſame kind, tho' in different circumſtances, that the Phariſees did. Again,

All atheiſtical perſons, who deny the being of God and providence, and ſcoff at all religion, and would make others believe it is a mere cheat and impoſture; tho' theſe are not guilty of the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, becauſe they do not believe our Saviour's miracles; yet they have ſinned as much or more againſt their natural light, and are guilty of as great or greater blaſphemy againſt God the father, than the Phariſees were; and the ſin of ſuch perſons will be rather more unpardonable than thoſe of the Phariſees. Indeed, a total apoſtacy from the Chriſtian religion, is of all other ſins the neareſt to the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; and as ſevere things are ſaid by the apoſtle againſt it, as what our Saviour hath done againſt the blaſphemy of the Holy Ghoſt.

But there are other ſins, which tho' not of ſo horrid a nature as this great unpardonable ſin, yet have in them a natural tendency towards it; and which every one who truly regards his ſoul, ought to avoid. Such are profane drolling upon religion, and ridiculing the holy ſcriptures and the Chriſtian faith; alſo infidelity and not believing Chriſt's religion, notwithſtanding all the evidence we have of the truth of it. Tho' theſe are not direct blaſphemies againſt the Holy Ghoſt, yet they have ſome affinity to it; and thoſe who are guilty of them,

will

will have a ſad account to make up at the day of judgment, unleſs they timely repent of ſuch ſins.

"Some think that every deliberate ſin againſt knowledge, and after conviction, is the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. This, no doubt, is a very great aggravation of ſin, and ſuch as calls for a great and particular repentance; but does by no means render a man incapable of forgiveneſs. Others are troubled with blaſphemous thoughts, and thoſe they think to be the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. But this is generally the mere effect of melancholy, and the perſons troubled with theſe ſad thoughts are no way conſenting to them, but they ariſe in their minds againſt their wills, and without their approbation. And ſo far from being the unpardonable ſin, I hope and believe they are no ſins at all, but only the unhappy effects of bodily diſtemper; and will be no more imputed to us, than the wild ravings of a man in a fever. And God forbid that the natural effects of a diſeaſe ſhould bring guilt upon our ſouls. So that theſe perſons have reaſon enough for comfort, did not their diſtemper render them incapable of it.

The only practiſed uſe I ſhall make of this diſcourſe is, to caution men againſt the degrees and approaches of this ſin. For if the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt be unpardonable, then all approaches towards it muſt be dreadful. Such as ſcoffing at religion, abuſing the holy ſcriptures, rejecting the evidence of Chriſtianity, perſevering obſtinately in a ſinful vicious courſe, notwithſtanding all the motives and arguments of the goſpel to perſuade men to repentance. Sinning againſt the clear conviction of our conſciencies, and the motions of God's good ſpirit to the contrary. Malicious oppoſing the truth, when the arguments for it are evident to any unprejudiced mind. Theſe are ſins of a high nature, and come the neareſt to this great and un-

pardonable ſin. And if they are long continued in, we know not how ſoon God may withdraw his grace from us, and ſuffer us to be hardened thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

Let us then be ready to entertain the truth whenever it is fairly propoſed to us, and with ſuch evidence as we are willing to allow of, in other matters. Let us do nothing contrary to our known duty, but be careful in all things to obey the convictions of our own conſcience, and to yield to the good motions and ſuggeſtions of God's Holy Spirit, who works ſecretly upon the minds of men; and often gently inſpires us with good thoughts and inclinations, and is grieved when we do not comply with them; and after many repulſes will at laſt withdraw himſelf from us, and leave us to be aſſaulted with the temptations of the devil, and to be hurried away by our own luſts, into ruin and perdition.

Diſcourſe CXV. Bp. *Stillingfleet.*

The TERRORS of the LORD ſhould DETER SINNERS.

2 Cor. v. 11.

Therefore knowing the terror of the Lord, we perſuade men.

THE Chriſtian religion, whether we conſider the authority of thoſe who firſt publiſhed it, or the weighty arguments it contains, and their agreeableneſs to the moſt prevailing paſſions of human nature, is in all reſpects the beſt contrived of any religion, to accompliſh ſo noble a deſign, as the reformation of mankind. The great holineſs of thoſe who preached it, the clearneſs and evidence, the ſtrength and efficacy of their reaſoning, are mighty advantages for that purpoſe. No arguments can be more proper to perſuade mankind, than thoſe which work on their reaſon and conſideration; no motives more prevalent to ſtir them up to the exerciſe of it, than their own happineſs and miſery; no happineſs and miſery ſo much deſerves regard, as that which is eternal. And this immortal ſtate, the Chriſtian religion deſcribes, with the greateſt plainneſs, confirms with the ſtrongeſt evidence, and enforces on the conſciences of men, with the moſt powerful and perſuaſive rhetoric. The apoſtle's deſign was to perſuade men; that is, to convince their judgments, to gain their affections, and reform their lives. The argument they uſed for this end, was no leſs than the terrors of the Lord; not the frowns

of the world, the fear of men, nor the malice of devils; but the terrors of the Almighty, whoſe majeſty makes the devils tremble, whoſe power is irreſiſtable, whoſe wrath is inſupportable. Not the terrors of the Lord in this world, which yet is dreadful enough; but that which ſhall be diſplayed at the dreadful day of judgment, when we "muſt appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, "that every one may receive the things done in his "body, according to that he hath done, whe-"ther it be good or bad." The terror which relates to our final and eternal ſtate, in another world, is what the apoſtle means. And this he ſpeaks, not from poetical fables, ancient traditions, uncertain conjectures, or probable arguments, but from full aſſurance of the truth he delivers; "knowing "therefore the terror of the Lord, we perſuade "men."

The goſpel contains a mixture of the higheſt clemency and greateſt ſeverity, the richeſt mercy and ſtricteſt juſtice, the moſt glorious rewards and moſt intolerable puniſhments; we there find God deſcribed as a tender father and terrible judge, as a God of peace and vengeance, as an everlaſting happineſs, a conſuming fire. And the Son of God, as coming once with great humility, and to come again with majeſty and great glory; as appearing once, with all the infirmities of human nature, and again with all the demonſtrations of a divine power and preſence; once, as the Son of God to take away the ſins of the world by his death and paſſion; and again, as judge of the world, with flaming fire, to execute vengeance on all impenitent ſinners. The intermixing theſe doctrines in the goſpel, was intended for the benefit of mankind, that ſuch whom the condeſcenſion of his firſt appearance could not oblige to leave their ſins, the terror of his ſecond coming may aſtoniſh, when they

they knew that their ingratitude and disobedience will be examined into; that such who despise the meanness of his birth, the poverty of his life, and shame of his death, may be filled with horror and amazement, when they consider the majesty of his second coming in the clouds, to "execute judgment upon all, to convince all that are ungodly, not only of their ungodly deeds, but of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against them." And we shall easily see what great reason there is that Christ's second coming to judgment should be called the terror of the Lord, if we consider the following particulars. As,

1. The terror of the preparation for it, which is thus described by St. Peter; "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." This day will come and surprise us as a thief in the night, which makes it the more dreadful, because surprizals confound mens thoughts, deject their spirits, and betray the succours which reason offers. But when surprize shall be the least astonishing circumstance of men's misery, what horror will possess their minds at the apprehension of it? What confusion and amazement may we suppose he was in, who being pleased with the fulness of his condition, "said to his soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry; but God said to him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall all those things be that thou hast provided?" Had God only said, this night thy barns shall be burnt, and thy substance consumed to ashes, that must occasion him a strange present consternation, tho' he might have comforted himself with the hopes of

of living and getting more. But, "this night ſhall "thy ſoul be required of thee."

O dreadful words! O the tremblings of body, the anguiſh of mind, the pangs and convulſions of conſcience, which they muſt occaſion! What ſad reflections muſt they create? That the pleaſure he had promiſed himſelf for many years, ſhould have an end in a very few hours: his mirth ſo ſuddenly turned into bitter howlings, his eaſe into a bed of flames! O miſerable creature! to be thus deceived by his own folly, and after ſo many warnings, be ſurprized and betrayed into everlaſting miſery!

Theſe are the agonies of only one ſingle perſon, whom death ſnatches away, in the midſt of his years, pleaſure and hopes; but this will be the caſe of too many in the terrible day of the Lord, which "as a ſnare ſhall come on all them, that dwell on "the face of the earth." If ſome of the expreſſions uſed by St. Luke concerned the unexpected coming of Chriſt to judgment upon Jeruſalem; yet we are alſo to conſider them as not only the forerunner, but figure of Chriſt's coming to judge the world. But then, the burning of Jeruſalem was a very imperfect repreſentation of the general terror of mankind at the conflagration of the world. "When the heavens ſhall paſs away, with a great "noiſe, or mighty force, and the elements ſhall "melt with fervent heat." When all the fiery bodies in the upper regions of the world, which have ſo long remained in an even regular courſe, ſhall then be let looſe; and by a rapid, violent motion, put the world into a flame and confuſion; So that the earth and all things therein, ſhall be turned into one funeral pile; then the foundation of the earth ſhall be ſhaken, and God will rain fire and brimſtone from heaven; ſo that nothing ſhall be able to reſiſt or withſtand the force of his merci-

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leſs fury. What will then become of the moſt magnificent piles, the moſt curious ſtructures, the moſt ſtately palaces, the moſt laſting monuments, the moſt pleaſant gardens and delightful countries, and all the glories of this world? They ſhall be all buried in one common heap of ruins, the whole face of the earth ſhall be like the top of mount Ætna, nothing but rubbiſh, ſtones, and aſhes. What will then ſignify the pride and gallantry of the vain, the large poſſeſſions of the great, or the vaſt treaſures of the rich? And what will become of the wicked and ungodly, who have ſcoffed at theſe things, "and walked after their own luſts, "ſaying, where is the promiſe of his coming." When this great day of wrath comes, how will they ſtand or eſcape his fury? If they hide themſelves in dens and rocks, they will then fall into the burning furnaces of the earth; and the "moun-"tains may fall upon them, but can never hide "them from the wrath of the Lamb." If they go down into the deep parts of the ſea; even there ſtorms, tempeſts and ſhowers of fire ſhall overtake them, and God's vengeance purſue them, with everlaſting flames. Well therefore may Chriſt's coming to judgment be called the terror of the Lord. For can any thing be imagined more full of horror and amazement, than to ſee the world in a flame about us? to ſee the earth every where vomit and caſt up fire, the ſea to boil like water in a ſeething pot; to hear nothing but perpetual claps of thunder, to ſee no light in the heavens but the flaſhing of lightning? And yet even this comes far ſhort of the terrors and fears of this great day. For the expreſſions of ſcripture do not mean that the world ſhall be only deſtroyed by the anger of God, but that this deſtruction ſhall be by real fire.

2. The terror of Chriſt's appearance; which ſcripture repreſents to us to be ſuch as may render the

the apprehenſions of it the more awful. As that he will come in the clouds of heaven, all the heavenly hoſt attending him, with power and great glory; and ſending his angels with a great ſound of a trumpet before him. After whom the Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. Not that we are to imagine any material trumpet; but the ſound of the laſt trumpet ſeems to be the ſame with the "voice of the ſon of God, which "the dead are ſaid to hear and live." That is, it ſhall be an effectual power for raiſing the dead, louder than any trumpet. His ſecond coming is alſo deſcribed, as "ſitting on the throne of his glory, and all the holy angels about him, and all nations gathered before him," to receive their ſentence. His throne will be moſt magnificent and glorious, and ſo dreadful, that from it will "proceed lightnings, thunderings and voices; his majeſty ſo terrible, that heaven and earth will fly from his face, "the dead, ſmall and great, are to ſtand before "him, to be judged according to their works." And if the appearance of a common judge is dreadful to a guilty priſoner, if the majeſty of an earthly prince begets awe and reverence, where there is no fear of puniſhment; what may we imagine when juſtice and majeſty both meet in the perſon of the judge; fear and guilt in the conſcience of criminals! If the ſight on Mount Sinai was ſo terrible to Moſes, "that he did exceedingly fear and quake." If the viſion, which Iſaiah hath of God's glory, made him cry out, "woe is me, for I am undone, for mine "eyes have ſeen the king, the Lord of hoſts;" If when Daniel ſaw his viſion, all his ſtrength and vigour was gone, ſo that he ſtood trembling, tho' an angel hnd raiſed him from the ground: If theſe whom God appeared to in a way of kindneſs, were ſo poſſeſſed with fear, what horror muſt needs

needs ſeize on the minds of the wicked, when the "Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven in "flaming fire, on purpoſe to take vengeance on "them." If there appeared ſo much majeſty in our Saviour's countenance, when the officers came to apprehend him, that they "went backward and "fell to the ground;" how dreadful muſt it be, when he will manifeſt that glory to the world, which he then concealed! If in the ſhort time of his transfiguration, his own diſciples could not behold the glory of his preſence, but they "fell on "their faces and were ſore afraid," how ſhall his enemies abide the day of his wrath, or ſtand before him, when he ſhall appear in the full glory of his majeſty and power!

3. The terror of that day's proceedings; for then we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or evil. How full of terror will the proceedings of that day be, wherein all ſecrets ſhall be diſcloſed, all perſons actions examined and judged! This is the time of darkneſs, of diſputes and quarrels; but "in the "day, when the righteous judgment of God ſhall "be revealed," then the wiſdom and juſtice of divine providence ſhall be made manifeſt to all, for "every one ſhall receive according to his work:" and none will wonder at the ſentence, when they ſee the evidence. Then the moſt ſecret impurities, the moſt ſubtle hypocriſy, the moſt artificial fraud, the moſt diſſembled malice, ſhall be expoſed to public view. For then "God will bring to light "the hidden things of darkneſs, and make mani-"feſt the counſels of the heart." Then all the intrigues of luſt and ambition will turn only to men's ſhame and reproach. With what horror will they then behold all the ſins of their lives made public, ſet in order before them! How will men then

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curſe themſelves for being ſo eaſily tempted, and alſo thoſe who laid traps to betray them! What different apprehenſions will men then have of ſin, from what they have now! How will a ſinner then lament and ſay, had I believed this would have been the end of a ſinful life, I would have taken more care to prevent this miſery! O the folly of intemperance, the miſchief of ambition, the rage of luſt, the unſatiableneſs of covetouſneſs, the madneſs of debauchery, and the dull ſtupidity of atheiſm! What ſatisfaction are all the pleaſures of ſin to me, now I have loſt my ſoul forever! O that I had time to grow wiſe again, and reſiſt the cheats of a deceitful world! my ſins are as freſh in my remembrance as if they were yeſterday committed, and their burden heavier than the weight of mountains. O that I could ſee the end of my miſery! Nor will the only terror in the proceedings of that day, be for wicked men to have the ſeveral circumſtances and aggravations of their ſins ſet before them, and even that cannot be without horror and amazement; but their actions alſo muſt be ſtrictly and ſeverely examined, by a moſt powerful holy and juſt judge. And if it is ſo troubleſome to remember in this world thoſe wicked actions we have loved and delighted in; what will it be when they are all enumerated before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, who hates and abhors them; if men cannot endure to have their vices here repreſented to them, how will they bear the expoſing them to the view of the whole world? if ſins that we here deſpiſed for being little, and were diſregarded for their frequency, and laughed at as inſignificant, ſhall appear to have a greater malignity, than men imagined; what muſt we think of ſuch preſumptuous ſins, that offered violence to God's laws and the dictates of men's conſciences? Nor will length of time abate the ſeverity of God's enquiry, or leſſen

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his diſpleaſure againſt them. For tho' God in this world tempers his ſeverity with mercy, we have no reaſon to expect it in another.

This is the time of "God's patience and for-"bearance, and goodneſs towards ſinners, who is "not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all "ſhould come to repentance;" but if men will deſpiſe his goodneſs, abuſe his patience, and reject the means of ſalvation, then to their ſorrow, and by dreadful experience ſhall they find, that there is a day of wrath to come, and that "it is a fear-"ful thing to fall into the hands of the living "God." For that will be a day of juſtice and execution without further patience. Then no trifling excuſes will be taken to palliate ſins, and give eaſe to the minds of men. It will be in vain to charge our wilful ſins on the infirmity of our nature, the power of temptation, the ſubtlety of the devil, the allurement of company, the practice of the world, the corruption of the age, the fault of education, or the folly of youth; ſuch excuſes will be then too weak to be accepted, when it will appear to the eternal confuſion of ſuch, that their own vicious inclinations were the only occaſion of them. Then there will be no room for intreaties, or vain excuſes. God now ſhews his great pity and indulgence to mankind, in being ſo ready to hear the prayers, and grant the petitions of all penitent ſinners. But for thoſe who deſpiſe his inſtruction, diſregard the reproofs of his word, the rebukes of their own conſciences; who contemn and ſcoff at religion; what can they expect, but that when "they ſhall call upon him, he "will not anſwer, and when they ſeek him earneſt-"ly, they ſhall not find him; but he will laugh "at their calamity, and mock when their fear "cometh." O bleſſed Jeſus! didſt thou weep over an incorrigible people in the days of thy

fleſh,

fleſh, and wilt thou ſlight their miſeries when thou judgeſt the world? didſt thou then intreat and beſeech ſinners to be reconciled, and wilt thou not hear them in the day of thy judgment, when in the anguiſh of their ſouls they cry unto thee? Thus we ſee the mighty difference between Chriſt's coming as a Saviour, and as a judge; between the day of our ſalvation and the day of his wrath; between the joy in heaven at the converſion of penitent ſinners, and the confuſion of the wicked and impenitent. How terrible is God's wrath repreſented, when he puniſhes a people in this world for their ſins? it is called, "the day of the Lord's "vengeance, the great and dreadful day of the "Lord." If it was thus when his wrath was kindled but a little, when mercy was mixed with his ſeverity, what will it be when he ſhall ſtir up all his wrath, when the heavens and earth that never offended him, ſhall ſhake? What ſhall they then do who have diſpleaſed him? Then neither power, wiſdom, eloquence, nor craft, will be of any ſignification; for the great judge of that day can neither be over-awed by power, exceeded in wiſdom, moved by eloquence, nor betrayed by craft; but every man ſhall receive according to his deeds. The mighty conquerors ſhall then ſtand unattended with armies to receive their ſentence; the moſt renowned for wiſdom and knowledge will then find, that a ſincere honeſt heart will more avail, then the greateſt ſubtlety, or deepeſt learning; the moſt eloquent perſons without true goodneſs, will, like the man without a wedding-garment, be then ſpeechleſs; the moſt crafty and politic will then ſee, that tho' they here deceive themſelves and others, yet "God will not be "mocked, for whatever a man ſows, that ſhall he "reap."

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4. The terror of the ſentence which ſhall then be paſſed. This the judge hath already told us, to make us more apprehenſive of it in this ſtate, when we may prevent it, by ſincere repentance and a holy life. The terror of it is, "depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, "prepared for the devil and his angels." Words full of horror and amazement, if the importance of them is duly conſidered. Indeed wicked men are ſo little apprehenſive of the great miſery in departing from God, that they place their felicity here, in being at a diſtance from him. For while they purſue their luſts, the thoughts of God are uneaſy to them. But part of the miſery hereafter will be, that men ſhall not be able to cheat and abuſe themſelves with falſe notions of happineſs. The ſatisfaction they had in their luſts will ceaſe, and nothing remain but the ſad remembrance thereof, to torment them. The righteous ſhall ſee God, which implies the greateſt happineſs. But the wicked ſhall depart from him, wherein is comprehended the higheſt miſery imaginable. The ſcripture account of the joys and torments of another world, is more ſuited to our fancy than underſtanding; thence we read of ſetting down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, to repreſent the happineſs of the ſtate; and of a "gnaw-"ing worm, a devouring fire, and blackneſs of "darkneſs, to expreſs the miſery thereof." But as the happineſs of heaven infinitely exceeds the moſt lofty metaphors of ſcripture, ſo does the miſery of hell ſurpaſs the moſt dreadful repreſentation we can give of it. No word can fully expreſs the anguiſh and torment of the ſoul, in future miſery; "where the worm ſhall never die, the "fire ſhall be never quenched." As to what ſome object againſt the truth and injuſtice of this puniſhment, by ſaying, that there is no proportion be-

tween the ſins of this ſhort life, and the eternal miſery of another; in order to anſwer the objection, let me aſk ſuch, whether among men, it is not thought juſt and reaſonable to confine a perſon to perpetual impriſonment for a fault he was not an hour committing? nay, do not the laws of all nations make death the puniſhment of ſome crimes, which are very ſuddenly perpetrated? And yet death eternally deprives a man of all comforts of life. Shall then what is ſo conſtantly practiſed and univerſally juſtified in the world, be condemned as unreaſonable, when applied to God? But ſay ſome, if by eternal death, annihilation was only meant, there could be no exception to it. To which I anſwer by aſking, whether it would be unjuſt for human laws to deprive offenders of life, ſuppoſing their ſouls to ſurvive their bodies, and they forever ſenſible of the loſs of life? if not, why ſhall not God preſerve the honour of his laws, and vindicate his authority in governing the world, by ſentencing obſtinate ſinners to the greateſt miſery, tho' their ſouls forever live in the apprehenſion of it? Eſpecially, ſince God hath beforehand ſo evidently declared theſe things, made them part of his laws, ſet everlaſting life on the other ſide, to ballance everlaſting miſery, and in ſuch a manner propoſed them to a ſinner's option, that nothing but contempt of God and his grace, and wilful impenitency, can ever betray men into this dreadful ſtate of eternal deſtruction. Thus much for the argument uſed by the apoſtle, the terror of the Lord.

I ſhall now conſider the aſſurance he gives of the truth of it. "Knowing then the terror of the "Lord we perſuade men." It is of excellent uſe to produce the common apprehenſions of mankind, as to a future judgment, and the ſeveral arguments

arguments insisted on to that purpose; for if the thing was unreasonable to be believed, how come men, without revelation, to agree that it was just and reasonable. If the conflagration of the world was an impossible thing, how came it so anciently received by the oldest and wisest philosophers? How came it to be maintained by the Epicureans and Stoicks? Indeed they made these conflagrations periodical and not final. But then we should not reject that as impossible, which they assert hath been and may be done. The truth and certainty of this doctrine we prove from the word of God. We may indeed think a judgment to come reasonable in general, from the consideration of God's goodness, wisdom and justice; yet all this depends on the supposition, that God governs the world by laws, and not by power. But since God, who is the supreme judge of the world, hath himself declared, "that he "will bring every work into judgment, whether "it be good or evil;" since the Son of God made this so great a part of his doctrine, and declares the circumstances of his coming again for this end; since when on earth, he opened his commission he received from his father, by declaring, that the Father had committed all judgment to the Son, and that the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Since it was so great a part of the apostles doctrine, to preach of this judgment to come; no wonder St. Paul speaks of it with so great assurance, "know-"ing therefore the terrors of the Lord we per-"suade men." And none have the least reason to question it, but such as totally reject the Christian doctrine on the pretences of infidelity, which are so vain and trifling, that were not their lusts stronger

than their arguments, men of ſenſe would be aſhamed to produce them. To apply then what has been ſaid.

Seeing all theſe thiugs ſhall be diſſolved, and knowing the terror of the Lord, what manner of perſons ought we to be, in all manner of converſation. There is a great variety of arguments in the Chriſtian religion, to perſuade men to holineſs, but none more affecting to the generality of mankind, than the terrors of the Lord; and if that will not prevail, there is no reaſon to expect that any argument ſhould. If an almighty power cannot awaken us, if infinite juſtice cannot terrify us, if a judgment to come will not make us tremble, and eternal miſery leave no impreſſion on us, what other arguments or methods can reclaim us? But if neither temporal judgments and mercies, nor the conſiderations of future ones hereafter, will make men better in this life; judgment without mercy ſhall be their portion in another. O the infatuating power of ſin! when neither the pity of an indulgent father, nor the frowns of a ſevere judge can draw us from it; when neither the bitter paſſion of the Son of God for our ſins, nor his threatning to come again to take vengeance for them, can make us hate and abhor them; when neither the ſhame nor contempt, the diſeaſes and reproaches which attend ſin in this world, nor the intolerable anguiſh and miſery of another, can make men ſenſible of their danger ſo as to forſake them. Could we repreſent to our minds, that ſtate wherein we muſt all ſhortly be, when the buſineſs, pleaſures and diverſions of this world ſhall ceaſe, and every one muſt give an account of himſelf to God; what a different opinion of theſe things ſhall we then have in our minds? and with what abhorrency look on every temptation to ſin? how

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ſhall we hate the ſight of thoſe who betrayed us into ſin, or flattered us afterwards? Did men aſk themſelves this reaſonable queſtion, why they will defy God, by violating his laws, unleſs they were ſure he either could not, or would not puniſh them for it, they would be more afraid to offend him. For to do it, ſuppoſing both, is perfect madneſs; and to queſtion his power, who is almighty, or his will who hath declared it, and which is immutable, would be the height of folly. How deſperate then muſt the condition of ſuch be, whom no arguments can perſuade to leave their ſins? In the other ſtate, there is no breaking priſon, no eſcaping tryal, no corrupting the judge, no reverſing the ſentence, no pardon after judgment, no reprieve from puniſhment, no abatement or end of miſery. O impenitent ſinner! how then canſt thou hope, either to fly from or endure God's wrath, that is ſwiftly coming to arreſt thee by death, and convey thee to thy tormenting priſon? Canſt thou hope God will diſcharge thee before that dreadful day comes, when he confines thee there on purpoſe for it? Canſt thou think that day will never come, which the vindication of God's juſtice, the honour of Chriſt, the happineſs of the bleſſed, as well as the puniſhment of the wicked, make it ſo highly neceſſary that it ſhould come? or canſt thou hope then to defend thyſelf againſt an all-ſeeing eye, a moſt righteous judge, and an accuſing conſcience? When all the mercies thou haſt abuſed, the judgments thou haſt ſlighted, the motions of grace thou haſt reſiſted, the checks of conſcience thou haſt ſtifled, and all the ſins thou haſt committed, ſhall riſe up in judgment to condemn thee; Grant, O God, that we all may have wiſdom to conſider

sider these things in time, the terror of the Lord may persuade us, to break off our sins by sincere repentance, and so to live, that we may die with peace, comfort and assurance of being ever with the Lord, in his eternal joy.

Discourse

Diſcourſe CXVI. Abp. *Hort.*

Things TEMPORAL and ETERNAL compared.

2 Cor. iv. 18.

While we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.

THE apoſtle in this chapter informs us of the great hardſhips and perils to which he and Timothy had been expoſed while they were propagating the Chriſtian faith; and from thence proceeds to ſhew the grounds of their wonderful patience and conſtancy under thoſe trials, namely, their firm belief and hope of a reſurrection to eternal life, as a reward of their preſent ſufferings. For which cauſe we faint not, ſays he; for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Heavy as theſe afflictions were, they ſeemed light and inſignificant, when compared with the great reward that was certainly to follow. Tho' theſe holy men expoſed themſelves to ſo much miſery, yet they had better ſupports and proſpects than the world was aware of. Their eyes were fixed on that recompence of reward, on that crown of glory, which waited for them beyond time and the grave. It was this, and not the ambition of triumphs and ſtatues, the honour of Pagan heroes, that inſpired their Chriſtian warfare. If we conſider theſe

words as expreſſing the heavenly frame and temper of the apoſtles minds, which were habitually abſtracted from the pleaſures and purſuits of this world, and fixed upon the next; they may be rendered of very extenſive uſe, as they give us the great and diſtinguiſhing character of every pious Chriſtian; which is "to walk by faith and not by "ſight;" and to have all his deſigns and actions influenced by the hopes and fears of hereafter, and not of this preſent life. It will be proper then to explain what is meant by things ſeen, and not ſeen, and what by looking at them.

By the things that are ſeen, we are to underſtand all ſenſible objects of this lower world, which affect us, either with pleaſure or pain, good or evil, and are the common ſubjects of mens cares and purſuits, hopes and fears. All thoſe good things that are neceſſary for the ſupport of our bodies, or the gratification of our natural appetites and deſires; and all thoſe evil things, ſuch as pain, poverty, perſecution, hunger, thirſt, and whatever is grievous to human nature, are comprehended under the denomination of things that are ſeen. By the things that are not ſeen, we muſt underſtand the joys and felicities that are prepared for all Chriſtians in heaven; ſuch as fulneſs of joy in God's preſence, and pleaſures that are at his right hand for evermore; of being for ever with the Lord; of things prepared for them that love God, which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. And tho' at preſent we can form no diſtinct idea of theſe things, yet we may be certain in general, that good men will paſs into a ſtate of happineſs exceeding great and glorious after the reſurrection. Theſe are the things not ſeen; ſuch as being diſtant and future cannot be the objects of our bodily ſenſes. And yet good Chriſtians do now ſee them by the eye of faith,

faith, and in ſome meaſure enjoy them by hope and expectation: For "faith is the ſubſtance of things "hoped for, the evidence of things not ſeen."

By looking at theſe unſeen things, is meant, a firm belief that ſuch things do really and truly exiſt. That this tranſitory life, at the longeſt, is not the whole of our duration, but only the firſt ſtage of it. That the ſcripture's account of a future ſtate are not the inventions and contrivances of ſtateſmen and prieſts, to enſlave the conſciences of men, by the apprehenſion of another world; but that there is as certainly a heaven and hell for rewards and puniſhments, as we are now alive, and which all men will find ſo by experience. And without this fundamental point, all religion muſt fall to the ground. For it appears by daily obſervation, that arguments drawn from the beauty, excellency and conveniency of virtue are weak things, when oppoſed to mens corrupt luſts and appetites; and therefore the goſpel ſupplies this defect, by aſſuring us, that godlineſs is profitable for all things, having the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Again, the looking at things which are not ſeen, implies our chuſing heavenly enjoyments for our chief happineſs. The foundation of that great patience and courage, which the apoſtles ſhewed under perſecutions and ſufferings, was the reward they expected after this life; for this was the ſum of their hopes and deſires. St. Paul having ſhewed his contempt of worldly things, the loſs of which he "counted but as dung, ſo he might "win Chriſt; adds, but this one thing I do, I "preſs towards the mark of the prize of the high "calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus." That is, in running my Chriſtian race, I chearfully part with all the enjoyments of this world, as bearing no compariſon with the heavenly felicities, which I have

choſen for my portion. The inviſible things, which are only to be diſcerned by the eye of faith, draw all my attention, and engage my unwearied purſuit.

Hence we may obſerve, what the different characters are between a wicked and good man; that every wicked man chuſes his happineſs only by his ſenſes; his aims and proſpects are all linked to this preſent life, and his whole buſineſs is to make proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof. Nothing appears valuable to him but gold and ſilver, and large poſſeſſions of land; nothing delightful and pleaſant, but the gratification of his appetites; nothing great and honourable, but power, titles and worldly ſpendor: Theſe are the only things good and deſirable to him, with which his heart is contented, and he looks no further. But the deſires of a religious man are not ſo eaſily ſatisfied; for his happineſs is of a different kind: He conſiders the dignity of his nature, and requires a happineſs fit for a reaſonable creature; he has no notion of any ſupreme good but God, nor of any true felicity but that of heaven; and while others are vainly running from one object to another, endeavouring to find new pleaſures, that will ſatisfy without cloying; the language of his ſoul is, "Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee! my fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is the ſtrength of my heart and my portion for ever." A wicked man is all for the preſent, ſaying, let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die; but a religious man is more thoughtful and conſiderate; he looks after things that are not ſeen, for his eternal inheritance. Again,

To look at things which are not ſeen, is to make them the great and governing principle of all our views, in the general conduct of our lives. Our being in this world is meerly a ſtate of tryal and probation, wherein we are to prepare ourſelves for thoſe

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rewards that are in the next life; which will be greater or less, according to our behaviour here, and the improvement we have made of the talents committed to our charge. We should therefore use the good things of this life, in such a manner as to render them most subservient to our obtaining those better things which are eternal. As a wise merchant, who travels into remote countries in order to enrich himself, lives frugally abroad, with a view to encrease his stock, and by degrees to make remittances into his own country, where he intends to enjoy the riches he has acquired; just so every good Christian ought to conduct himself. His main business in this world should be to negotiate his great concerns and interests for the next. For he knows that he is only a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, and does not expect to receive the fruits of his labours, till he arrives at heaven. If therefore he has procured worldly riches, he will give food to the hungry, clothes to the naked, medicines to the sick, and release innocent debtors from confinement. He will relieve unhappy families reduced to misfortunes, who are ashamed to beg. He will find out obscure merit, and encourage those who by their knowledge have promoted the good of mankind. He is well assured that charity is highly pleasing to God, and that he who hath "pity upon "the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which "he hath given, will he pay him again." For which reason he thinks it wise to be charitable, and out of his earthly estate, to lay up treasures in heaven. But a wicked man thinks all is lost, that is not spent in gratifying his lusts and appetites; or else foolishly hoards it up without any enjoyment, for his heirs to lavish away.

The true Christian acts with equal prudence and good conduct, in the use of worldly power and honour. He employs the authority and influence

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of his ſuperior ſtation, in protecting and countenancing the innocent and virtuous; in ſuppreſſing and diſcouraging vice and vicious men; in reſcuing the oppreſſed and reſtraining oppreſſors; in lifting up the humble and modeſt, and bringing down the proud and inſolent. "He is a terror to evil-"doers and a praiſe to them who do well." He is a common refuge to the poor, an aſſertor of liberty and property, a juſt magiſtrate, a lover of his country more than of his own intereſt. He employs his authority and credit for promoting the honour of God, and the advancement of religion among men. He conſiders power and honour not to ſet off his own perſon, and attract the worſhip of his inferiors, but as talents committed to his truſt; and his great care is to improve them, that he may be always ready to paſs his final account. And the pleaſures of ſenſe, which prove the ruin of others, he turns to the good of his own ſoul. If his natural appetites are importunate, it affords him an opportunity to approve his virtue, by reſtraining them within the bounds of temperance. Every taſte of God's good creatures excites his gratitude and thankſgiving to his benefactor, and is made a freſh motive to love and obedience. How different this from the voluptuous man, who, like brute beaſts prone to the earth, never lifts up his eyes towards heaven, but receives the bounty of God with a thoughtleſs and thankleſs heart? Thus does every good Chriſtian uſe this world ſo as not to abuſe it, by making it the ſum of his happineſs. Riches, honours and pleaſures, which are purſued as the ultimate end by others, are in his eſteem only the means of obtaining things in heaven. All his views and deſigns centre there, and are made ſubſervient to his obtaining at laſt, the things that are not ſeen. Laſtly, To look at things unſeen, is to make them the frequent ſubjects of our attention and meditation. A

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man's affections will naturally follow the chief objects of his thoughts. If it be distant in place, his heart is there; if it be future, his thoughts will outfly time, and steal some enjoyment of it beforehand; if it be hard to obtain, the difficulty makes him the more eager and industrious to acquire it.

A religious man, according to scripture, is one that is "spiritually minded, who walks by faith, "and not by sight; who sets his affections on things "above, and not on things on the earth; and whose "conversation is in heaven;" whither his soul is often carried upon the wings of holy contemplation and devotion. On the contrary, every wicked man is there described, as one who "minds earthly "things; who is carnally minded, and who walks "after the flesh."--Having thus shewn what is meant by the things that are not seen; and what by looking at them; I will now offer some considerations to excite us to practice. And,

The things which are not seen are much more excellent in their nature, and better fitted to make rational creatures happy, than the things that are seen. The good things of this world are calculated for the support and comfort of our bodies, which being void of all understanding, sense and motion, have no kind of perfection, but what arises from matter. Indeed, the whole structure of the world is most perfectly contrived by the great architect to answer the purposes for which he designed it; but still it is only matter diversified by form and texture, variously to affect our senses, and serve the uses of animal life; and therefore every part of it is liable to dissolution. It is therefore a poor happiness that these things can afford to an intelligent creature, who by his reason alone is of more real value and worth, than whatever does besides live upon earth. It is departing from the dignity of our nature, to chuse a happiness in common with brute beasts, who have

have nothing but their ſenſes for their enjoyment. And yet this fooliſh happineſs is the height of a ſenſual man's ambition; who is governed like them, with preſent objects, and makes his immortal ſoul, to become ſubject to his body. But as our bleſſed Saviour has brought life and immortality to light in his goſpel; let us remember this, and ſhew ourſelves men as well as Chriſtians; let us have ſome regard to the dignity of our natures, by diſdaining to be on a level with the loweſt creatures, when we may partake with the angels in glory, and enjoy thoſe pure pleaſures, that are at God's right hand for evermore.

Let us conſider, that things inviſible are not the leſs important for not being objects of our preſent ſenſes; even of material things, thoſe that eſcape our ſight have the moſt powerful effects. The gravitation of bodies, which keeps all parts of the world in their proper places; the attraction of the moon, which is the cauſe of tides; the prodigious force of winds and air, are all cauſed by inviſibles. It is therefore downright ignorance to aſcribe ſo much to viſible objects, and ſo little to inviſible ones. Tho' miſtakes of this kind in philoſophy are not very material, yet with regard to religion, they will prove fatal; becauſe the great ſprings and motives of it, are all inviſible. The being of God, the certainty of a heaven and hell, are conſiderations of the utmoſt importance to every man; and could we poſſibly ſee them with our eyes, they would make very powerful impreſſions upon the ſtouteſt heart. Beſides, theſe inviſible things are not the leſs certain for being future. Where cauſes are permanent, the effects are as certain as if they actually exiſted. The riſing of the ſun to-morrow is a futurity, and yet we are perfectly ſure of it. As certainly then as God is juſt and true, and will judge the world and perform his promiſes; ſo ſure will

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the great rewards of virtue follow this life. "For we know, that if our earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is therefore againſt reaſon and common ſenſe, to ſuffer our minds to be ſo engaged by preſent objects, as to be inattentive to events of infinite importance, only becauſe they are future.

The laſt conſideration I ſhall mention, is in the words of the text, "for the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal." And were they equal in other reſpects, yet this ſingle difference would be ſufficient to determine our choice. This is a motive level to the meaneſt underſtanding. No ſenſible man would chuſe a leaſe for a ſhort term of years, when he might eaſily have the inheritance. And yet this is the caſe as to all worldly enjoyments, which at the beſt are held by a ſhort leaſe. They can laſt no longer than this tranſitory life; and even this ſhort term may be further ſhortened by innumerable accidents. And could it be inſured to ſeventy or eighty years, yet who can inſure its enjoyments? One ſtroke of divine providence may ſweep all away, as it did to Job. Have we not frequent inſtances of men, that are rich to-day and beggars to-morrow? But ſhould life and riches hold out to the laſt, may not health fail; without which, what are riches, and even life itſelf? The difference is ſmall between enjoying nothing, and having nothing to enjoy. But if a man by a peculiar felicity ſhould eſcape theſe evils, and enjoy health and wealth to old age, which is a period moſt men deſire to ſee, tho' when it comes they give it a very poor reception; yet how little is the pleaſure when his ſenſes are blunted, and the evil days are come, when he ſhall ſay, I have no pleaſure in them? Thus it is with every man who chuſes the things that are ſeen,

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for his chief portion. But with the good Chriſtian the caſe is quite otherwiſe. He chuſes the things that are not ſeen, becauſe they are liable to none of thoſe caſualties and interruptions, and chiefly, becauſe they are eternal; his full enjoyment will not commence till the end of this ſhort life.

Let us therefore ſtudy this moſt uſeful art, of rendering all the good things of this life, ſubſervient to our obtaining thoſe which are eternal in the next. Let us chuſe theſe for our portion, and make them the daily ſubjects of our contemplation. If once we can bring ourſelves to this divine habit, it will be a means of freeing us from the ſlavery of our luſts, which are the hardeſt of all taſk-maſters and tyrants; for they demand all our time, health, riches and honour, as a ſacrifice to their ſervice. It will guard us againſt the danger of evil temptations, which will loſe their power, when we have more tempting objects in our eye. This will be a ſure method to preſerve our virtue, and prevent many a bitter repentance. It will prove a wonderful cordial under all the calamities of this life; "for which cauſe, ſays St. Paul, we faint not, "for our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal "weight of glory." Remove this proſpect, and the difference will immediately be perceived; virtue will languiſh and droop, the evils of life will appear magnified and formidable. Above all, it is the only ſupport we can have, and a noble one too, upon the near approach of death. This is the time, when the heart of a wicked man ſinks within him, to obſerve the ſcene of all his joys and comforts flying backwards, as he is going into the great deep of futurity. But then it is, that the proſpect of a religious man begins to open and riſe in view; and thoſe great inviſibles, that he has ſo long hoped and wiſhed for, will then change their aſpect, and become the

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objects of ſight and fruition. I ſhall now make an inference or two from what has been ſaid. And

Hence we may conclude, that a good man has no juſt cauſe to be afraid of death; for he is ſecure againſt all the evil conſequences that render it dreadful. "The ſting of death is ſin." The expectation of being judged to eternal puniſhment, for a wicked and impenitent life, is the only juſt cauſe of dreading death. But with reſpect to a good man, this ſting is taken out, and he may therefore triumph in theſe words; "O death! where is thy ſting, "O grave where is thy victory?" And may "thank "God, who has given him the victory, thro' Jeſus "Chriſt our Lord." For this reaſon the death of the righteous is often called ſleep in the holy ſcriptures; for they are ſure of awaking to a more glorious and happy ſtate, in the morning of the reſurrection; and therefore may as contentedly lie down in their graves, as they do in their beds. But to all wicked men, the ſting of death is truly terrible; becauſe it puts a final period to their only happineſs, and opens the door to endleſs pains and miſeries. They ſhall indeed riſe again, as certain as the righteous; but it is only in order to die the ſecond death. "Death and hell were caſt into the lake of fire, this "is the ſecond death." By death is here meant, all human bodies that ever died, and lay buried in the earth or water; by hell, which ſignifies Hades, we are to underſtand all the departed ſpirits or ſou's that formerly inhabited thoſe dead bodies. Theſe being united in the ſame perſons at the reſurrection of the wicked, are to be caſt into the place of torment. Let all wicked men therefore conſider, that this dreadful day will ſurely come. Let them paint to themſelves that cruel ſcene and diſtreſs, when they ſhall ſay "to the mountains and rocks, fall on "us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth "on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb."

And where is the hardened ſinner, that will not then repent, if he could? But alas! it will be then too late. "For now only is the accepted time, now only is the day of ſalvation. To-day, therefore, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

The chief uſe to be made of this diſcourſe, is to lead us to reformation and amendment of life. I need not here enumerate the particulars of a good life; becauſe there is no man, who has been brought up in the Chriſtian religion, but knows very well how to diſtinguiſh between virtue and vice, in their main inſtances: and by applying to his own conſcience, he may be informed, whether he is doing good or evil. All the great and eſſential parts of virtue and vice are ſo plainly laid down in the goſpel, and ſo evident to every man's conſcience, that he may eaſily know whether he is acting right or wrong. St. Paul has given a ſhort ſummary of a Chriſtian's duty in theſe words. "The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world." This ſhort leſſon is ſo full and clear, that no man who is honeſtly diſpoſed, can miſs of the right way to heaven, if he duly attends to it.

Here then is the rule of a good life, which no Chriſtian can miſtake, unleſs he be perverſe and wilfully blind. Let him but ſincerely endeavour to live up to the precepts of the goſpel, and he need not doubt of being duly prepared for his final account. And if his life is found conformable to this rule; if he has uſed his beſt endeavours to perform his Chriſtian duty; and that where he failed thro' the infirmities of his nature, or the ſtrength of temptations; if he has been truly penitent, and implored the forgiveneſs of God, and reſolved thro'

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his grace to do so no more; this is all that will be required by the great judge, according to the indulgent terms of the gospel. But where this main qualification is wanting, nothing else will be admitted in its stead. No high professions, no speculative faith, no zeal for outward observances, and human constitutions, no attachment to religious parties, will pass instead of a good life, or a sincere and uniform obedience to all the laws of the gospel. Our blessed Saviour declares, "that not every one that "saith unto me, Lord, Lord," (or who professeth my "religion) shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; "but he that doth the will of my father which is "in heaven." God shall render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honour and immortality, he will render eternal life; but tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.

Diſcourſe CXVII. Dr. *Clarke.*

The SHORTNESS and VANITY of WORLDLY HAPPINESS.

Job v. 6, 7.

Altho' affliction cometh not forth of the duſt, neither doth trouble ſpring out of the ground; yet man is born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards.

THERE is no book in the old teſtament, that contains greater and fuller acknowledgements of the glory and power of God, nobler and more lively deſcriptions of the works of creation and providence; more moving and affectionate declarations of the ſhortneſs and vanity of human life, and the tranſitorineſs of all worldly enjoyments; clearer and plainer ſignifications of the hope of the beſt and wiſeſt men in all ages, concerning a reſurrection to a future life, than are to be met with in this eloquent book of Job.

Theſe words contain a pathetical deſcription of the ſhortneſs and vanity, the ſorrows and calamities of human life. "Man is born to trouble, as the "ſparks fly upwards;" alſo a declaration, that theſe miſeries of human life, do not ariſe from chance or neceſſity, from blind fate or unaccountable accidents; but from the wiſe diſpoſition of God's providence, which governs the world. "Affliction "cometh not forth of the duſt, neither doth trouble "ſpring out of the ground." And we may from hence infer, that there are many juſt and good, wiſe

wiſe and uſeful ends, why God permits ſo many afflictions to fall upon men; the conſideration of which ſhould teach us patience and chearful reſignation to the divine will. Theſe ſeveral obſervations, naturally ariſing from the words of the text, I ſhall more particularly conſider in the following diſcourſe.

The ſhortneſs and vanity, the ſorrows and calamities of human life, are moſt conciſely deſcribed in theſe words; "man is born to trouble, as the "ſparks fly upwards." Afflictions and calamities of various ſorts, ſeem in the courſe of things as neceſſarily and conſtantly to attend the life of man, as it is the nature of light things to aſcend upwards, or of things heavy to deſcend; this is evident by experience. We are born into the world weak and defenceleſs; we grow up, ſubject to numberleſs caſualties; and during our whole lives, are perpetually expoſed to trouble and danger, which cannot be foreſeen nor yet prevented. The weakneſs and imperfections of childhood, the vanity and follies of youth, the cares and ſolicitudes of manhood, the uneaſineſs and infirmities of age, cloſely ſucceed each other. And in each of theſe ſtates, we are continually obnoxious to pains and diſeaſes of body; and in moſt of them to the acuter torment of anxiety and vexations of mind. All which evils are encreaſed by the accidents and misfortunes of the world, by our own negligences and vices, and by the judgments of God upon ourſelves. "Man is chaſtened with pain upon his bed, and the "multitude of his bones with ſtrong pain. He "walketh in a vain ſhadow, and diſquieteth himſelf "in vain; he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who "ſhall gather them. All things come alike to all; "there is one event to the righteous and the wicked; "to the clean and to the unclean, to the good and "to the ſinner."

The ſcripture compares the vanity and ſhortneſs of human life, to a "vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away; to a tale that is told, and then remembered no more; to a wind that paſſeth away, and cometh not again;" admoniſhing us upon all occaſions, that "our days are ſwifter than a weaver's ſhuttle, and are ſpent without hope. That they are ſwifter than a poſt; they flee away, and ſee no good. That man who is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble, he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow and continueth not. His days are as graſs; as a flower of the field, ſo he flouriſhes; for the wind paſſeth it over, and it is gone, and the place thereof ſhall know it no more." Jacob complains, that "few and evil had the days "of the years of his pilgrimage been;" and yet he far exceeded the uſual meaſure of the preſent age, and enjoyed much larger poſſeſſions than the generality of mankind. This ſhortneſs and vanity of human life, is ſo obvious to every man's experience, that it ſeems needleſs to remind men of what they cannot but know. And yet ſo it happens, that the evident certainty of the thing, is the reaſon why men never attend to it, but live as if they knew it not. It requires no reaſoning, no arguing, no meditation, to convince men, that they muſt ſhortly die; and for this cauſe, tho' without any reaſon, they put away the thoughts of it, as too trivial and obvious, and live as if it would never happen. But,

With this pathetical deſcription of the ſhortneſs and vanity, the ſorrows and calamities of human life, that man is born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards; the text contains likewiſe a declaration, that theſe miſeries and troubles do not ariſe from chance or neceſſity, from blind fate or unaccountable accidents; but from the wiſe diſpoſition of the

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providence of God, which governs the world. "Af-
"fliction cometh not forth of the duſt, neither doth
"trouble ſpring out of the ground." The only true and ſolid comfort that can ſupport us under the troubles of life and againſt the fears of death; that can effectually enable us either to bear patiently the afflictions and troubles that will neceſſarily attend us here, or to be willing to depart hence, with any hopes of entering into another and better ſtate hereafter; is to conſider, that there is a God, a powerful and juſt, a wiſe and good being, that governs the world: by whoſe wiſdom and goodneſs all things are deſigned, by whoſe providence all things are conducted, to obtain the beſt ends; by whoſe power we were created, under whoſe care and government we are preſerved and ſupported; in whoſe preſence we continually are; in whom we live, move and have our being; without whom not a ſparrow falls to the ground, nor ſo much as a hair of our head can periſh; without whoſe direction no evil can befal us, without whoſe permiſſion no power can hurt us, and who is able to make all things work together for good, to them who love and fear him. This thought alone, that God governs the world, is a conſideration ſufficient to ſupport us, under all the miſeries and vanities of the world. For, tho' we could not diſcover, why he made us thus, nor the reaſon of his afflictions; the ways of his providence being inextricable, and his judgments unſearchable; yet any reaſonable conſiderate mind will think it prudent and ſafe to truſt and rely upon infinite wiſdom and goodneſs. That power, which in the frame of the natural world, has adjudged all things by weight and meaſure; that power which with exquiſite art made every thing to conſpire regularly and uniformly towards completing the beautiful fabrick of the material univerſe; that power then ſhould ſurely in his go-

vernment of the moral world, in his diſpoſing of intelligent rational creatures, even tho' we could give no account of his ways, be believed by us to direct all things for the beſt in order to bring about the nobleſt and moſt excellent ends: eſpecially as in this dark ſtate our finite underſtandings are able to diſcern many wiſe and uſeful deſigns, in the ſevereſt and moſt difficult diſpenſations of his providence. We have therefore great reaſon to ſubmit, not only with patience and reſignation, but with joy and ſatisfaction, to his good pleaſure; firmly believing that all things will at the great day, when the whole counſel of God ſhall be more perfectly diſcloſed, appear to be moſt wiſe, good and gracious.

Did our afflictions come forth of the duſt, and our troubles ſpring out of the ground; were there no other cauſe to produce them, no other hand to direct them, no other power to overrule and remove them, than the accidental concurrence of ſenſeleſs atoms, than the fortuitous reſults of unguided matter and motion, than the blind effects of nevitable fate, or unintelligible chance; then it would be certain, that there could be no rational comfort and ſupport to a conſiderate mind, under the various misfortunes and calamities of life. For what is the hope of unbelievers, when God, or as they ſay, fate or chance, taketh way their ſoul? and on what ground can the confidence of an atheiſt rely? His expectations at beſt are thin as a ſpider's web; his hopes as the light chaff, which the wind ſcattereth from the face of the earth; his proſperity and mirth can be but for a moment, and his adverſity muſt of neceſſity end in deſpair. For what relief is to be expected from fate or chance? how ſmall a comfort is it, to know that death will ſoon put an end to all the miſeries and calamities of life; if our view be only bounded by that dark proſpect,

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and there be no expectation beyond the grave? And yet theſe are all the comforts that infidelity can afford, and all the hopes of him who is without God in the world. For tho' in proſperity ſuch may ſay, "come on, let us enjoy the good things that are "preſent;" yet, in the days of ſorrow, he will be convinced of his folly, and repent when it will be too late. His rejoicing will be turned into deſpair, his paſt pleaſures will be remembered as a dream, ſeem as a ſhadow that departeth. His preſent troubles will be inſupportable; and his fears of what poſſibly is to come, will be unmixt and without hope. The pretence of philoſophy, of fortitude and firmneſs of ſpirit, of deſpiſing pain, and looking upon death as only putting an end to our being, will appear mere empty deluſion. And he only is capable of any true comfort and ſupport, who being convinced that all things are directed by the all-wiſe government of the providence of God, doth by a life of piety and true holineſs, finally ſecure to himſelf the favour of that ſupreme diſpoſer of all things.

The ſame appearances of nature, the ſame arguments of reaſon, which demonſtrate the being and exiſtence of God, do alſo approve his providence in governing the world, and his inſpection and direction of all events; ſo that even from the light of nature itſelf, to which all impartial perſons gives ſufficient evidence of the being and providence of God, it is manifeſt, that no affliction, no trouble of any kind, can poſſibly happen to us, without his permiſſion. I am the Lord, and there is none elſe.—I am the light, and create darkneſs; I make peace and create evil, (not moral but natural evil.) I the Lord do all theſe things. The Lord killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up again. Thoſe things which to us ſeem the moſt caſual and acci-

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dental, in reſpect of God, are really providential, and could not happen, did not he, for wiſe reaſons, permit them. And as they could not come to paſs without his knowledge and permiſſion, we may therefore be aſſured, that he intends them to ſerve ſome wiſe and good ends of providence, becauſe he did not think fit to prevent them.

But ſince it ſeems implied and may be inferred from the text, that we may diſcover many juſt and good, wiſe and uſeful ends, for which God permits afflictions to fall upon men, and which ought to teach us patience and reſignation to the divine will; it may be proper to conſider for what reaſons God ſhould order things as they are, and why we ought to acquieſce in the divine good pleaſure.

Let us then conſider, that many of thoſe things which we uſually eſteem among the troubles and afflictions of life, are ſuch as muſt be reſolved into the abſolute ſovereignty and dominion of God. Of this kind are mortality and the ſhortneſs of human life; the unequal diſtribution of riches, honour and temporal things; the different capacities and abilities, the different tempers and conſtitutions, the different ſtates and conditions of men in the world. For infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs, may diſplay itſelf in producing what variety of creatures he pleaſes; and in communicating his free bounties in what meaſure and proportion he thinks fit, without giving any account of his ways. It is no juſt ground of complaint in men, that they were not created angels; any more than it is an injury to inferior creatures, that they are not endued with the capacities of men. We have all more reaſon to be thankful for what we have, than to be diſpleaſed for what we have not. It is ſufficient, if in matters of rewards and puniſhments, God in the end deals equally with all his rational creatures; and diſpoſes of each of them, according to the proportion

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of their several deserts in their respective stations. It was just, that the servant who gained four talents by the improvement of two, should be rewarded with four cities; and that the reward of ten cities should be allotted to him, who had improved five talents to ten. But why the one should be intrusted with five, and the other but with two, no other account can be given, than that it is "lawful for "God to do what he pleases with his own. Hath "not the potter power over the clay, of the same "lump to make one vessel to honour, and another "to dishonour?" one person unconditionally to final happiness, and another to misery; but as in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour; so hath not the master a right to employ his servants in what stations he pleases, more or less honourable? provided in his final distribution, he deals equitably with each of them, in their several and respective degrees.

The scripture as well as reason refers us to this sovereign power of God, in accounting for the unequal distribution of temporal and spiritual advantages. "He plucketh down one, and setteth up "another; "he maketh poor and maketh rich; he "bringeth low, and lifteth up." He causeth one nation or people to be rich and powerful, and another to be poor and weak. He reveals himself to different people in a different manner. And in all this, there is neither reward nor punishment, but the various exercise of his wisdom and power over his creatures, without wrong or injury to them. God has an absolute right of acting by his sovereign power, and doing what he pleases with his own. And since all we enjoy proceeds wholly from God's free goodness and bounty; no man, whether he has received less or more, many or fewer advantages,

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has any juſt reaſon of complaint, or any ground to ſay unto his maker, why haſt thou made me thus? inaſmuch, as they who enjoy the feweſt advantages, always receive more than they deſerve, or can claim; and have no wrong or injury done them, by the abounding of God's free goodneſs to others. And this is the caſe, with reſpect to moſt of thoſe things which we are apt to think are the greateſt afflictions and calamities of life; when perhaps they are often no real and poſitive infliction of God's judgments, but merely the original differences of mens ſtates and circumſtances, the different talents committed to their charge, the different ſtations God has placed men in, for the various trials, by the exerciſe of a diverſity of duties. Poverty has not always the nature of an affliction or judgment, but is rather a ſtate of life appointed by God, for the proper trial and exerciſe of the virtues of contentment, patience and reſignation. The ſame as to want of honour and power, want of children, weakneſs of body, ſhortneſs of life, and the like; nay and even of ſpiritual diſadvantages; want of capacity and good underſtanding; want of knowledge and inſtruction, and of many opportunities and improvements which others enjoy. None of which are juſt ground of complaint againſt God, or any reaſon why we ſhould not acquieſce in his divine good pleaſure; ſince all theſe things are only different diſtributions of ſuch free gifts, as God not being obliged to beſtow on any man, he may divide to every one in what meaſure and proportion he thinks fit.

But this we may depend upon, that in ſuch meaſure only will God exact our duty, as he enables us to perform it; and that to whom little is given, of him ſhall not much be required. And this brings all the ſeeming inequality in the world to a real equality at laſt; ſo that he "which gathers

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"much hath nothing over; and he that gathers "little has no lack." And we may, with St. Paul, "ſay, O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom "and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his "judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!" In all circumſtances of life therefore, we are not to be uneaſy, that God has made us inferior to others, or requires us to go thro' greater hardſhips, or has given us leſs abilities and fewer opportunities than others. But we are wholly to apply ourſelves, with all reſignation of mind, to the proper duties of that ſtation, or thoſe circumſtances, where God has been pleaſed to place us. Poverty is not an argument to envy the rich; but a ſtrong obligation to ſtudy the duties of humility, contentment and reſignation. Ignorance and want of capacity, meanneſs of parts, and want of inſtruction, is not a reaſon to murmur that God has not intruſted us with more talents; but an admonition to take care, that we make a right improvement of thoſe few that are given us. Weakneſs of body is not a juſt occaſion to repine againſt God, for not giving us ſtrength and health; but affords us a continual argument, to exerciſe and improve ſuch virtues as are more peculiar to the mind. The conſideration of the uncertainty and ſhortneſs of life ought not to make us ſpend our time in fruitleſs complaints of the vanity and meanneſs of our ſtate; but to make us conſider, that it is not of ſo much importance how long we live, but how well; for honourable age is not that which ſtandeth in length of time, nor that which is meaſured by numbers of years; but wiſdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unſpotted life is old age. Again,

Let us conſider, that a great part of the troubles of life, and the afflictions we complain of, are not the immediate appointment of God, but the mere natural effects and conſequences of our ſins. This

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conſideration alone ought to make us acquieſce with all humility and patience, under that burden which we, and not God, have brought upon us. For why ſhould a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſins? why ſhould he murmur againſt God, when he eateth but the fruit of his own ways, and is filled only with the natural conſequences of his own devices? very unreaſonably and unjuſtly this. For, if poverty be the effects of extravagancy, profuſeneſs, and riotous living; if pain and diſeaſes of body be the effects of debauchery and intemperance; and the comforts of age be prevented by the follies of youth; if anxiety and vexation of mind be the vanity of covetouſneſs, of whom there is "no end of all his labour, neither is "his eye ſatisfied with riches;" ſuch troubles as theſe neither come forth of the duſt, nor do they ſpring out of the ground, neither can they be complained of as proceeding from the hand of God; but they are the natural effects of mens own folly. For they who plow wickedneſs ſhall reap iniquity, and they who ſow iniquity ſhall reap vanity. And yet even theſe afflictions may by a wiſe improvement, and by behaving diſcreetly under them, become the occaſion of much religious advantage. Theſe are a few of the many conſiderations, which ought to oblige us in all circumſtances of life, readily to acquieſce in the good pleaſure of God. There are others which are grounds of not only ſubmiſſion, but even thankfulneſs alſo to God for ſending afflictions greatly to our advantage; ſuch are thoſe which are intended by him to teach us humility, to lead us to repentance, to wean us from the love of this world, to try and improve our faith, and to make eminent examples of patience and reſignation, fortitude and contempt of the world.

One end which God propoſes by afflictions, is to teach us humility, and a juſt ſenſe of our own unworthineſs.

worthiness. Tho' pride was not made for man, nor a haughty spirit for him that is born of a woman: tho' nothing is more absurd and unnatural, than for dust and ashes to be lifted up against its maker; and for the thing formed to exalt itself against him that formed it: tho' nothing can be more ridiculous and unreasonable, than for man, whose breath is in his nostrils, to despise and behave insolently towards his brother, who is of the same nature and dignity, and of like passions with himself; yet in fact so it is. For man often being in honour hath no understanding, and being puffed up with prosperity, considereth not whereof he is made, and remembreth not that he is but dust. Such is the weakness of our nature, that when one is made rich, and the glory of his house is encreased, he is apt to forget, that when he dieth he shall carry nothing away with him, and that his glory shall not descend after him. When power is put into our hands we are extremely apt to make will succeed in the place of reason, and humour and passion instead of right. And the only proper preservative against, and effectual remedy for this evil, is that mixture of afflictions, which, by the wise appointment of providence, brings men to a right sense of themselves, and their dependance upon God, and is therefore called the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Another end of God's sending afflictions and troubles upon men, is to lead us to repentance for our past errors. When a wicked man prospers in all his worldly affairs, and his designs are crowned with perpetual success; when he is surrounded with undisturbed plenty, and all his appetites are gratified with the constant enjoyment of ease and pleasure; it is no wonder that he forgets God, and considers not, that for all these things he will call him into judgment. He is apt to put far from him the

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evil day, and ſay, to his ſoul, "take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry." The greateſt bleſſing and happineſs that can befal ſuch, the greateſt inſtance of the mercy of God towards them, is the ſending ſome great affliction, which like a ſevere medicine in a very dangerous diſtemper, may bring them to a right ſenſe of themſelves and their danger. The ſilent inſtruction of reaſon and true wiſdom, the ſoft voice of God in the gentle admonitions of conſcience, is not attended to by inconſiderate perſons, in the hurry of paſſions, among a multitude of appetites, which have been conſtantly gratified. But when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, then the "inhabitants of the world will learn righ-"teouſneſs." Then men begin to conſider what their ſtate and condition is. Conſideration is the foundation of repentance, the firſt motive and beginning of religion; and afflictions have a proper tendency to convert wicked men; much more are they ſuited to convince good men of their failings, to make them ſenſible of their errors, and bring them to more conſideration, to more perfect repentance and amendment. David confeſſes, "that it is good for me, that I have been afflicted; for before I was afflicted, I went aſtray, but now have I kept thy word." And afflictions are evidences of God's love and care. For whom the Lord loveth, he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth. And tho' no chaſtening for the preſent ſeemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheleſs afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs, unto them which are exerciſed thereby. We muſt therefore learn of pious Job, and ſay "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, bleſſed be the name of the Lord. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil?"

Another end of God's ſending afflictions and troubles, is to wean us from an over fond love of the

the present world. There is nothing that more hinders mens progress in religion, and cools the zeal even of well disposed persons, than a constant habitual enjoyment of the pleasures of life: O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions; that has nothing to vex him, but hath prosperity in all things. A long and uninterrupted prosperity is a perpetual danger and temptation. The Christian church, upon the emperors first becoming Christian, began to receive worldly encouragements, and then did contentions among Christians multiply, and the purity of their manners decrease. And it has been justly observed in our own nation, that true religion never had so much influence upon mens lives and manners, as when it was most in danger of being removed from us. For this reason God seldom makes his best servants most prosperous in this world. And yet afflictions have also their temptations to impatience, discontent, and complaining against God; and prosperity, if well employed, may become an excellent virtue. For "blessed is the rich, that is found without blemish, and hath not gone after gold." Let us not then be solicitous after either state, but with all submission leave that entirely to God; who knows much better than we, what is most convenient for us.

To conclude: It is very wrong to imagine, that whoever is much afflicted must consequently be very wicked, and that God is angry with him. Indeed, when a man's conscience can apply his affliction to his own sins, it is just and reasonable he should accept it as the punishment of sin, and as an argument to repentance; but he must by no means make another man's affliction an occasion of censuring his neighbour. For the scripture declares, "that happy is the man whom God correcteth; nay, blessed is the man whom thou chasteneth, O Lord, and

teacheſt him out of thy law." Let us therefore reſign ourſelves with all patience to the will of God, and rely upon him, with full truſt and aſſurance, that he will finally direct all things to our beſt advantage. This was the practice of David, who when he was greatly diſtreſſed, encouraged himſelf in the Lord his God. And this was the reſolution of the prophet, "tho' the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines; tho' the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; tho' the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my ſalvation."

Diſcourſe CXVIII. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

GOOD MEN STRANGERS and PILGRIMS ON EARTH.

Heb. xi. 13.

And confeſſed, that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.

THE apoſtle having before declared, that faith is the great principle whereby good men are influenced and ſupported under all the evils and calamities of this life; in this chapter he more particularly repreſents to us, the force and power of faith; by which he means, a firm perſuaſion of things not preſent to ſenſe, but future and inviſible. Faith (ſaith he) "is the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen;" it repreſents to us the reality of things which are inviſible, and diſtant from us; ſuch as the exiſtence of God and his providence, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. He then goes on to give ſeveral inſtances, that the firm belief and perſuaſion of theſe things, was the great principle of the piety and virtue of the ſaints and pious men, in all ages of the world; by this Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, Joſeph, Moſes, and others, obtained a good report, and pleaſed God, by all thoſe eminent acts of obedience and ſelf-denial, which are recorded of them. They believed the being of God, and "that he is a re-

" warder of them that diligently ſeek him. They dreaded his threatnings, and relied on his promiſes of future and inviſible good things. They lived and died in a full perſuaſion of the truth of them, tho' they did not ſee them actually fulfilled and accompliſhed. They " all died in faith, not having received the promiſe, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſuaded of them and embraced them." Tho' they did not ſee theſe promiſes made good in their days, yet they believed them, and heartily rejoiced in the hope and expectation of them; for " they confeſſed that they were pilgrims and ſtrangers on earth." The apoſtle, in this type, repreſents to us, the condition of good men, while paſſing thro' this world. They are " pilgrims and ſtrangers on earth," travelling here for a time, as the patriarchs did in the land of Canaan, in expectation of a better condition in heaven.

From theſe words, I ſhall endeavour to repreſent our preſent condition in this world, and to excite in us a due ſenſe and ſerious conſideration thereof: the ſame condition that all the ſaints and holy men before us have been in: a condition very troubleſome and unſettled, like that of pilgrims and ſtrangers; ſo that every one of us may ſay with David, " I am a ſtranger with thee, and a ſojourner, as all my fathers were." This we muſt all acknowledge, if we truly eſtimate our preſent ſtate. But tho' " they confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on earth;" yet they were not without hope and expectation of a more happy condition in reverſion. What bore up the patriarchs under all the evils and troubles of their pilgrimage, was an expectation of a future inheritance, a quiet and ſettled poſſeſſion of that good land, which God had promiſed them. And good men do alſo expect, after the few and evil days of the pilgrimage in this world are expired, a bleſſed inheritance, " in

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" an heavenly country, and with Abraham, look " for a city which hath foundations, whoſe builder " and maker is God." It is frequent in ſcripture, and other authors, to repreſent our condition in this world, by that of pilgrims and ſojourners in a foreign country. For our immortal ſouls, which are our nobleſt and moſt excellent part, are natives of heaven, and but pilgrims and ſtrangers on earth, and are to return to that heavenly country from whence they came. Thus David, " We are ſtrangers before thee, and ſojourners, as were all our fathers." So St. Peter, " paſs the time of your ſojourning here in fear. And I beſeech you as ſtrangers and pilgrims, to abſtain from fleſhly luſts." And Plato tells us, it was a common ſaying, that " the life of man is a kind of pilgrimage." Alſo Tully, " When I leave this world (ſays he) I look on myſelf as departing out of an inn, and not as quitting my own home and habitation; nature having aſſigned this world to us as a place to ſojourn, but not to dwell in." This is agreeable to what the apoſtles ſaid of the patriarchs " that they were pilgrims and ſtrangers on earth;" and of all Chriſtians, " here we have no continuing city, but we ſeek one to come." Without following the metaphor too cloſe, I ſhall only conſider two things, which ſeem to be intended by the apoſtle; namely, that our condition in this world is very troubleſome and unſettled. We being ſtrangers and pilgrims. And that we are to live in expectation of a more happy condition, when we leave this world. " They " confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims " on the earth;" that they expected ſome more bleſt condition hereafter, when God's promiſe ſhall be fully made good.

That our condition in this world is very troubleſome and unſettled, ſeems to be intended by the metaphor of ſtrangers and pilgrims. And ſuch was

the life even of the patriarchs; they had no conſtant fixed abode and habitation, but were continually wandering about, and in their travels were expoſed to many hazards, dangers, afflictions, and miſeries. Such alſo is our condition here; often troubleſome, always uncertain and unſettled. Not to inſiſt on the weak and helpleſs condition of infancy; how helpleſs and inſufficient that ſtate is for its own preſervation, and to anſwer its natural wants and neceſſities; nor yet the dangerous vanity and deſperate folly of youth; or the infirmities and contempts, the tedious and weariſome days and nights, with which old age is afflicted, ſo as to render life not only unpleaſant, but almoſt an intolerable burden: not to dwell on theſe, which yet poſſeſs a great ſhare and portion of our lives; if we conſider man in his beſt ſtate, we ſhall find him to be altogether vanity. We need not travel into remote countries, to make life more troubleſome and uneaſy. Wherever we are, whether at home in our native country, or abroad, we ſhall there find trouble and inconvenience enough to convince us, that we are but ſtrangers in it. Good men more peculiarly are liable to many evils and ſufferings, on account of their virtue and piety. And becauſe "they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them," and takes all occaſions to torment them, either by doing or ſpeaking evil of them. Beſides theſe, there are abundance of common and natural inconveniencies, to render human life uneaſy. For we muſt either live alone, or in company. But how few can tolerably enjoy themſelves alone, for any conſiderable time? for tho' ſelf-love is a prevailing principle, yet ſcarce any care to converſe with themſelves. And if we try the converſation of men, it muſt daily grieve us, to ſee the cenſoriouſneſs, uncharitableneſs, and inſincerity of one towards another; how kind to the face, how detract-

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ing behind the back! and this one reigning vice is enough to make an honest, sincere, upright man to be sick of the world, and glad to steal off a stage, where all is personated, nothing true and natural; where the conversation of most men is insidious and designing, full of flattery and falshood, of good words and ill offices: where "one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth," there are numbers who lie in wait to deceive. And when a man hath done all the good he can, endeavouring to oblige every one, to live inoffensively, and also exemplarily; he thinks himself well off, if he escapes censure for doing good, and obtains a pardon for what truly deserves praise. But these melancholy considerations aside; when we are in the health and vigour of our age, when the humours of our body are not soured by great disappointments and losses, by the death of friends and relations, or other cross events and sad accidents; yet we are continually liable to all these. And the perpetual fear and apprehension of them is no small uneasiness to our minds, and in a great measure robs us of the comfort, pleasure and sweetness of all our enjoyments. Sometimes the evils we fear overtake us, and as one affliction and trouble goes off, another succeeds.

If we have a plentiful fortune, we are apt to abuse it to intemperance and luxury, which naturally produce pains and diseases, and this takes away the comfort and enjoyment of a great estate. If we have health, then perhaps we are afflicted with losses, deprived of friends, crossed in our interests and designs, or something happens to impede or interrupt the contentment and happiness of our lives. It may be an unexpected storm, a sudden calamity, in an instant sweeps away what with great care and industry we have been years saving up. Or, if our estate remains, our children are taken away, to

whoſe comfort and advantage the pains and endeavours of our whole lives were devoted. But ſhould none of theſe happen, which is ſcarce poſſible, yet to convince us that a perfect ſtate of happineſs is not to be expected here, we find by experience, that thoſe who enjoy the greateſt accommodations of life, are yet as far from true happineſs, as thoſe who are moſt deſtitute of what is eſteemed the greateſt felicity of this world. It often happens, that they who have at command and in their power all the requiſites and ingredients of a worldly felicity, yet have not ſkill and ability to frame from thence a happy condition of life to themſelves. For tho' ſome have health, friends, reputation, ſtate, and all outward accommodations that heart can wiſh; yet in the midſt of ſuch bleſt circumſtances, they are uneaſy in their minds; in their ſufficiency they are in ſtraits. They are ſurfeited with happineſs itſelf; and even nauſeate their good condition; tho' they want nothing to make them happy, but the thought of being ſo. They can be as much troubled, without having any thing to diſturb them, as thoſe who have the real cauſes of diſcontent; which plainly ſhews that happineſs is not to be found in this life, "but all is vanity and vexation of ſpirit."

And whatever happineſs we are capable of enjoying here, is attended with great uncertainty; ſhort at the longeſt, and every moment in danger of being loſt. We have no ſecurity that any earthly felicity ſhall be continued to us. There is nothing here, but we may be deprived of by a thouſand accidents; or, we muſt die, and in that day all our worldly hopes and enjoyments will periſh. Here we have no abiding-place, no continuing city; it is therefore vain to expect happineſs in a world that we are only to travel and paſs thro', not to ſtay in. Thus we ſee that our condition here is very troubleſome and unſettled.

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And this world's being a ſtate of pilgrimage, alſo implies a tendency to future ſettlement; an expectation of a more happy condition hereafter. For ſo the apoſtle reaſons, "They confeſſed that they were pilgrims and ſtrangers on earth; for they that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that they ſeek a country;" that is, they who acknowledge themſelves to be pilgrims and ſtrangers on earth, and yet profeſs to be perſuaded of the goodneſs of God and the fidelity of his promiſe, do "plainly declare that they ſeek another country." This is ſpoken of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob. There are many conſiderations apt to perſuade good men of a future ſtate; as, that mankind is generally poſſeſſed with this hope and perſuaſion; that the more wiſe and virtuous men have been, the more clearly have they apprehended the hopes of immortality, and the more contentedly reſigned themſelves to death, as having a larger proſpect of future happineſs; that God hath appointed our condition here to be troubleſome and unſettled, on purpoſe to make us ſeek elſewhere for happineſs, to elevate and raiſe our minds to the hopes and expectations of a condition better and more durable than what this world affords; and which, conſidering the goodneſs of God, his gracious providence, and care of good men, is a thing of itſelf extremely credible. And if this is our condition in the world; if we are "pilgrims and ſtrangers, "and look for a better, heavenly country;" this ought to have a great influence on us in many reſpects.

Let us then entangle and incumber ourſelves as little as poſſible in this our pilgrimage; let us not too far engage our affections in the pleaſures and advantages of this world, becauſe we are only to paſs thro' and not to ſtay in it. Let us "as ſtrangers and pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which

which war againſt the ſoul." The gratifying our inordinate luſts, and our carnal and ſenſual inclinations, is directly oppoſite to the nature of our immortal ſpirits, to their great deſign and buſineſs in this world. Fleſhly luſts pollute and defile us, they ſink our affections into the vanities and follies of this life, and unfit us for that pure, ſpiritual and divine life, which can alone qualify us for our heavenly country and inheritance. And therefore while our ſouls ſojourn here, we ſhould abſtain from, and be unſpotted by them, as being perfectly contrary to the laws and manners of our heavenly country. If in paſſing thro' this world, we wallow in brutiſh and fleſhly luſts, our native country, when our ſouls think to return thither, will reject and caſt us out. When we knock at heaven's gate, expecting to be admitted, and ſhall cry, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he will bid us depart from him, becauſe we have been workers of iniquity. Nothing that is unclean can enter into heaven. He who is to receive us into thoſe bleſſed manſions, hath abſolutely declared, that without holineſs none ſhall ſee the Lord. If then we hope to ſee God in that happy, bliſsful ſtate, "we muſt cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfect holineſs in the fear of God;" that we may become capable of the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of him for ever. And as for the advantages of this world, let us not purſue them too eagerly. We may uſe the conveniencies which fairly offer themſelves, and ſhould be content to want what we cannot honeſtly acquire; remembering that as we are travellers, a little will ſerve to accommodate us in our paſſage and pilgrimage. Why ſhould we covet more, or trouble ourſelves for what is not neceſſary on our journey, eſpecially by any unjuſt methods? If the providence of God offers them to us, by the uſe of

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honeſt diligence and lawful means, we are not to refuſe them; but then we ſhould not ſet our hearts on them, nor ſuffer our affections to be entangled by them. We ſhould act like thoſe who traffick in foreign parts, conſign our eſtates into our own native country, ſend our treaſures before us into the other world, to receive the benefit of them when we come there. And this we may do by alms and charity. What we ſpend on the fleſh, we muſt leave behind us, for it will not ſerve us in our own country; but what we lay out for the relief of the poor, is treaſure laid up for ourſelves againſt another day. "Giving of alms is providing for our-"ſelves bags that wax not old, a treaſure in the "heavens, that faileth not away."

If we are pilgrims and ſtrangers here, it concerns us to behave with great caution, and to lead blameleſs, inoffenſive lives; remembering, that thoſe whom we ſojourn with, are curious and narrow obſervers of our manners and carriage. Travellers never take that liberty and freedom, which the natives of the place do, but are perpetually on their guard, knowing how ſtrictly they are obſerved, and how little beloved, as being ſtrangers. Chriſtians then muſt be harmleſs and blameleſs, as it becomes the ſons of God to be, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe nation, among whom we ſhould ſhine as lights. Since we live among ſtrangers and enemies, we ſhould be careful to bring no ſcandal on our holy profeſſion; and therefore ſhou'd be kind to one another, and have no diſputes among ourſelves. And yet how ſhamefully do Chriſtians quarrel with each other, as if they were not related, nor ever expected to meet at laſt in the ſame country, there to live together forever!

Let us be alſo patient and chearful as we can, under all our troubles and afflictions. Thoſe who travel

travel in ſtrange countries, muſt expect to encounter with many injuries and affronts, great difficulties and hardſhips. Such as are tolerable we muſt bear with chearfulneſs. Many of the leſſer inconveniencies of human life ſhould be made matter of mirth and diverſion, not of melancholy and ſerious trouble. But there are ſome evils and calamities of human life ſo heavy as to require a high degree of patience to ſupport us under, and enable us to bear them decently: Such as the loſs of eſtates, friends, and deareſt relations. Theſe are ſome of the greateſt afflictions of this life, and hardeſt to be borne. For let men pretend what they will to philoſophy and contempt of the world, and its periſhing enjoyments; yet after all, nature hath framed, and planted in us ſtrong inclinations and affections to ourſelves and children, friends and relations; and which as naturally affect our hearts, as extreme hunger and thirſt can our ſtomachs. Whoever therefore pretends to have a mighty affection for any thing, and yet at the ſame time, can, without any great ſenſe of pain, contentedly bear the loſs of it, does not act like a philoſopher, but an hypocrite, and under a pretence of being wiſe, is in truth an ill-natured man; for moſt certainly in proportion to our love of any thing will be our trouble and grief for its loſs. So that under ſuch great and heavy ſtrokes, we ought to have both faith and patience. And indeed, nothing but the firm belief of an heavenly life, a bleſſed immortality in another world, is ſufficient to ſupport a man in the few and evil days of his pilgrimage, and to ſuſtain his ſpirits under the great evils and calamities of this life. And if we bear theſe afflictions patiently, and with a due ſubmiſſion to the will of God, it will certainly encreaſe our happineſs in the other world, and "work for

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us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Again,

The conſideration of our preſent uncertain condition and future hopes, ſhould ſet us above the fondneſs of life, and the ſlaviſh fears of death. This world at the beſt affords us but little ſatisfaction, and he is the wiſeſt man, that expreſſes towards it, an indifferent mind and affection; who is always willing to leave it, and yet is patient to ſtay in it, as long as God pleaſes. As for death, tho' the dread of it be natural, yet why ſhould its terrors ſurprize and amaze us, when we conſider, that to a good and pious ſoul, it is no other than the gate of heaven, an entrance into life eternal. Conſidering the numerous calamities to which we are liable in a long pilgrimage, there are only three things that can make our preſent condition here in any meaſure tolerable to a wiſe man: Namely, that God governs the world; that we are not always to ſtay in it; that there is a happineſs reſerved for us in another place, to recompenſe and make us amends for all the troubles and ſufferings of this life. And yet, alas, how do all covet life? old age will catch at every twig, to live a little longer; tho' there is no more pleaſure to be enjoyed, no more ſatisfaction to be expected and hoped for; nay, the beſt of us, after ſaying with David, "I am a "ſtranger and ſojourner with thee, as all my fathers "were," are ſtill apt with him to importune God for longer life; "O ſpare me a little, that I may "recover ſtrength, before I go hence and be no "more ſeen." And when God hath granted his requeſt, we would then be ſpared yet a little longer.

But let us remember, that as God did not deſign us to continue always in this world; therefore he made it ſo uneaſy, that we might be the more willing to leave it. Indeed, ſo long as we remain here,

here, we are detained from our happineſs; for "while we are preſent in the body, we are abſent "from the Lord." This conſideration made St. Paul ſo deſirous "to be diſſolved, that he might "have a much better habitation." This made him ſo full of joy, when about to leave this world. Nay, this conſideration, tho' but obſcurely apprehended, raiſed the ſpirits of the wiſer and better heathens, and filled them with joy and comfort at the thoughts of their diſſolution. With what conſtancy and evenneſs of mind did Socrates receive the ſentence of death? Who can read Cato's diſcourſe concerning his death, without being moſt ſenſible affected? "I am (ſays he) tranſported with a deſire of ſeeing my forefathers, thoſe excellent perſons, of whom I have heard, read, and written; and now I am going to them, I ſhould not willingly be drawn back again into this world. If ſome God would offer me at this age, to be a child again, and to cry in the cradle, I would earneſtly refuſe it, and on no terms accept of it——For what advantage is there in life, or rather, what labour and trouble is there not in it?" And if a heathen, who had only ſome obſcure glimmerings of another life, and the bleſſed ſtate of departed ſouls, could ſpeak thus chearfully of death; how much more ſhould we, to whom life and immortality are revealed and brought to light by the goſpel?

And we ſhould always prefer our duty and a good conſcience to all the world; becauſe our ſouls being immortal, are infinitely more valuable. "For what is a man profited, if he ſhould gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul; or, what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?" When we are tempted by temporal intereſts and advantages, or by the fear of preſent loſs and ſufferings, to deny our religion, or act contrary to our duty and conſcience, let us aſk ourſelves, what the profit and ad-

vantage will be? What! if for fear of men, I incur the wrath and displeasure of almighty God, whose frowns are more terrible than the bittereſt wrath, and moſt cruel malice of men, and therefore to be more infinitely dreaded? What, if to preſerve this frail, mortal body, I hazard the loſs of my immortal ſoul; to eſcape a temporary inconvenience, I forfeit everlaſting happineſs, and plunge myſelf into eternal miſery? would it not be a mad exchange, for any temporary gain and advantage, to loſe the things that are eternal, for the pleaſing ourſelves a little while, to become miſerable forever? If then we are ſtrangers and pilgrims on earth, and are truly perſuaded of God's promiſes as to an heavenly country, where we hope to arrive after the few and evil days of our pilgrimage are expired; let us not, by complying with the vicious cuſtoms and practices of an evil world, fruſtrate our hope, and baniſh ourſelves from the happy place to which we are going. We pretend to be travelling towards heaven, but if we make ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience, we deſtroy our hopes of arriving there. We do not live as if we expected a future happineſs, except the unſeen glories of another life raiſe us above the temptations of ſenſe. Our faith and hope have not their proper influence on us, if they do not govern our lives and actions, and make us ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of our holy religion, and in the conſcientious practice of it.

Laſtly, as ſojourners and travellers in this world, we ſhould often think of our end, and carefully mind the way to it. Our end is everlaſting happineſs, and the direct way thereto, is by a conſtant, ſincere and univerſal obedience to the laws and commandments of God. A way ſo plain, that a ſincere and honeſt man can never err. Therefore we muſt not ſuffer ourſelves to be led out of it, on any pretence whatever. If we will enter into life,

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we muſt keep the commandments. Would we always have our end in our eye, it will ſerve to direct us in our way, and quicken our pace. There being no more powerful motives to a good life, than to be aſſured, that if we " have our fruit unto " holineſs, our end ſhall be everlaſting life.

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe CXIX. Dean *Stanhope.*

The HAPPINESS of thoſe who DIE in the LORD.

Rev. xiv. 13.

I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, write; bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, ſaith the ſpirit, that they may reſt from their labours, and their works do follow them.

THE ſolemn manner in which theſe words are delivered, plainly diſcovers the great importance of them; and they are expreſsly commanded to be carefully preſerved in writing. "I heard a voice from heaven, ſaying unto me, write; bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." To which is farther added, the teſtimony of the Holy Ghoſt, confirming the truth of what was dictated by that voice, and particularly declaring wherein the bleſſedneſs of ſuch perſons conſiſts; "yea, ſaith the ſpirit, that they may reſt from their labours, and their works do follow them." Such preparatory forms always imply, that the ſubſequent matter is of mighty conſequence; and in this place, it is with a view more powerfully to awaken our minds, and recommend it to our beſt and moſt attentive conſideration.

The immediate occaſion and deſign of this paſſage, was to fortify the Chriſtians againſt ſome

violent perſecutions, that St. John foreſaw were then approaching; or, as others think, he deſcribes the bleſſedneſs of thoſe faithful profeſſors of Chriſtianity, whom the grace of God ſhould enable to perſevere unto the end, and to ſuffer martyrdom for the doctrines of the goſpel. Such perſons being ſometimes ſaid with a peculiar emphaſis, to die in the Lord, who lay down their lives for his ſake. But there is no neceſſity, nor indeed any juſt reaſon, of confining this expreſſion only to times of primitive perſecution, or to the martyrs who then ſuffered. For, as every ſincere good man, who heartily embraces the faith of Chriſt, and who lives as becomes that faith, is ſaid, at his death, to die in the Lord; ſo every one who continues in that belief and obedience to the end of his days, may properly be ſaid, when God takes him out of the world, to ſleep in Jeſus, and die in the Lord. In treating on theſe words, I ſhall endeavour to repreſent the happy ſtate of good men after death; and then draw ſome uſeful inferences for the conduct of our lives.

To repreſent the happy ſtate of good men after death, is what we can only endeavour at; for who can juſtly do it? What tongue of men or angels can find expreſſions ſtrong and ſignificant enough for the purpoſe? What images are ſo bright, ſo glorious? What underſtandings ſo large and capacious as to form an adequate idea of that bliſs, to which nothing in this life is equal, nothing like or comparable to it? That bliſs, which would loſe much of its perfection, if our finite underſtandings could fully comprehend it; and whoſe peculiar excellence it is, "that eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him." The utmoſt we muſt expect, is to have it drawn in ſuch proportions, as frail men are capable of;

of; by reſemblances taken from things familiar to us; and by ſuch conſiderations as are of moſt weight, in the affairs and tranſactions of human life. This is the method the holy ſpirit hath here made uſe of. The main arguments by which he raiſes our eſteem for that bleſſedneſs pronounced from heaven, upon the dead which die in the Lord, ſeem to be theſe; the troubles ſuch men are delivered from; they reſt from their labours. The good acceptance and great reward, which they ſhall receive after death, for what they have done well in this life; Their works ſhall follow them. The time when they enter upon this happineſs intimated in theſe words, "Bleſſed are the dead which die in "the Lord from henceforth."

They who die in the Lord are bleſſed, in regard of the troubles they are delivered from. "They reſt from their labours." I need not undertake to ſhew upon this occaſion, how ſore and manifold theſe labours are; for this is an argument which all of us feel and experience. We all know how we are ſurrounded with troubles and afflictions on every ſide; in our bodies, in our ſouls, in our public and private capacities. The vanities of youth and the infirmities of age; the difficulties of ſupporting our bodies, thro' the perpetual wants and weakneſſes to which they are ſubject; the lingering and acute diſtempers, the ſenſible decays, and more ſenſible pains, that waſte and torment them. The miſeries of an unhappy temper, and overflowings of a diſordered blood, which intercept all light and comfort, and condemn the ſoul to the dark diſmal priſon of a melancholy conſtitution; the violence of paſſions from within, and the amazing variety of accidents from without, continually provoking us to grief, anger, or ſome other exceſs; all theſe are the ſubjects of our complaints, and to which moſt of us are naturally liable.

The loſſes in our eſtates, the ſurprizing diſappointments in our expectations and deſigns, the hurry of buſineſs, the ſtrife and contention in which our affairs engage us; the travail of the poor, and the cares of the rich; the anguiſh of our afflicted, and the uncertainty of our proſperous condition; the treachery of pretended friends, and the malice of profeſſed enemies; the ſnares of converſation, the vanity and extreme danger even of thoſe diverſions and pleaſures, by which we endeavour to lighten this load of life, and gain ſome intervals of eaſe at leaſt, by forgetting for a little while our cares and calamities. Theſe, and innumerable many other difficulties, are inſeparable incumbrances on mortality to every one, conſidered apart from his relations and engagements in ſociety. And as thoſe capacities increaſe, ſo do our ſorrows and labours with them. The care of families, and kind concern for thoſe whom nature has made part of ourſelves; the fears and anxious thoughts for their ſafety; the fellow-feeling of their ſufferings; the reſtleſs endeavours to help them in their diſtreſſes, and the uneaſy regret we endure, when we would aſſiſt them, but cannot; or, when they would not ſuffer us to do them the good we could; and the having thoſe friends taken from us, whom nature, or kindneſs, or their own worth, have rendered very dear and neceſſary: The tearing as it were our hearts aſunder, by cutting off that tendereſt part of them, whom God and affection had incorporated and made one with us: Theſe are trials which we have ſo quick and piercing a ſenſe of, that it is much leſs difficult to lament and complain of them as they deſerve, than to temper our reſentments, and keep them within the bounds of duty, decency, and Chriſtian moderation.—A more moving ſpectacle may yet be given by opening the proſpect a little wider; and urging the uneaſineſs

eaſineſs we feel from the diſtreſs of the needy, the injuries of the oppreſſed, the cries of helpleſs widows and orphans; the corruptions, the calamitous circumſtances of the ſtate or church whereof we are members; all which affect us more ſenſibly, in proportion as we are better natured men, and better Chriſtians. But the moſt afflicting conſideration of all is, that theſe things not only create a preſent uneaſineſs, but may, if not carefully managed, lay the foundation of eternal miſery. That they are the temptations and inſtruments of ſin, ſuch as the frailty of human nature cannot eaſily reſiſt; ſuch as are often ſucceſsful even over the moſt watchful and reſolute; and therefore of all afflictions, the wiſe and good man eſteems thoſe the heavieſt, which hazard the ſalvation of his ſoul.

Theſe are all of them ſuch labours, as the condition we now live in naturally expoſes every man to; and ſuch as God does not exempt the holieſt and beſt beloved of his ſervants from. They, like their captain, are made perfect thro' hardſhips and ſufferings. Theſe are their ſpiritual warfare, the exerciſe of their virtue, the proof of their patience, fidelity, and conſtant love to him. God ſeems not very exact in the meaſures of good and evil in this world. Becauſe this ſtate is not the ſeaſon of final retribution; but he hath appointed another life, wherein he will make ample amends, for all we do and ſuffer here. The benefits we may at preſent expect, are the wiſdom and kindneſs of his providence, to turn every affliction to our good; the powerful aſſiſtances of his grace, to ſupport us under our conflicts; and the merciful hope of his promiſe, that after we have toiled and ſuffered a while he will tranſlate us to a ſtate of reſt and peace, and render that death, which to meer nature is ſo horrible, a bleſſing and privilege; as in truth it is to

thoſe who die in the Lord. For, ought not this to be a ſupporting conſideration, in the midſt of difficulties and troubles, that tho' theſe every way ſurround us, yet there is a day coming, when we ſhall be free from them; that God will hide us in the grave, and ſet us on that ſhore, where we ſhall ſafely look back upon this tempeſtuous world, free from the ſtorms that toſſed us here, and to have only the remembrance of them; a remembrance the more joyful, as our former miſeries were the more grievous. And it muſt afford a mighty comfort, to think that we ſhall ſhortly put off this load of infirmities; that we ſhall be perfectly free from all the diſturbances, which the luſtings of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit, and the irreconcileable war in our members, daily create to us. That God will place us where the enemy of ſouls cannot hurt us, nor temptation aſſault us, nor corrupt nature betray us, nor pain, affliction or danger overtake us. Surely man, who is born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards, hath reaſon to be pleaſed with ſuch a refuge as this; eſpecially when "God ſhall alſo wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain; for the former things are paſſed away." So valuable a bleſſing is it merely to reſt from our labours; ſo proper this argument to reconcile us to death, that it removes us to a place of eaſe and ſafety. But if this makes death tolerable, there is ſomething beſides, that makes it even deſirable. For

"Bleſſed are the dead who die in the Lord," becauſe they not only reſt from their labours, but their works follow them. The toil, drudgery, and whatever was grievous to them, is put off with that body, which expoſed them to corruption and ſuffering. But their labours are not forgotten, their diligence and conſcientious care, the meekneſs and reſignation

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wherewith they were endued, ſtill remain; and as to all the deſirable and advantageous purpoſes, they will abide with them forever in the other world. For by their works following them, is meant, that good acceptance and great reward, which the ſaints ſhall ſurely find after death, for their good deeds in this life. But we muſt not from this, and ſuch other expreſſions in ſcripture, infer ſuch merit and ſufficiency in the beſt of our works, as if we could thereby demand this happineſs due to us as of right. For "all have come ſhort of the glory of God, and no fleſh can be juſtified in his ſight," ſhould judgment and not mercy be the ſtandard of his proceedings. But the meaning is, that according to the terms of the goſpel covenant, which for the ſake and ſufferings of Chriſt, promiſeth pardon for ſins repented of, compaſſion for infirmities not indulged, and a recompence for thoſe good actions, which by God's grace we have performed, every ſincere Chriſtian ſhall not fail to be abundantly conſidered, in proportion to what he hath done and ſuffered. Such will be more or leſs rewarded, according to the trials and inſtances of every man's virtue; and in ſuch manner and meaſure as far exceeds the value of his beſt works, and the degree of his ſharpeſt afflictions. For we are aſſured, that "the ſufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory, that ſhall be revealed in us." And that "theſe light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a more exceeding weight of glory." God will deal with ſuch men, according to the riches of his own infinite mercies; and make them happy, far beyond what we can conceive.

In this imperfect ſtate of things, we can have no diſtinct notions of that future and vaſtly different ſtate, when this droſs of earth and ſenſual appetites

ſhall be purified; when the faculties of our minds ſhall be enlarged, freed from prejudice and error; and not as now darkly and thro' a glaſs, but to know even as alſo we are known. We now "ſpeak as children, we think as children, we underſtand as children;" but when we come to the fulneſs of the ſtature of perfect men in Chriſt Jeſus, we ſhall have very different apprehenſions of thoſe things. Then we ſhall ſee, know, and feel, that all thoſe lofty deſcriptions of heavenly joys in ſcripture, which now ſo hardly gain our belief, are much below the happineſs they would repreſent. O the incomprehenſible excellence of that knowledge, which ſhall ſee God as he is! O the delights of that wonder and praiſe, and perpetual thankſgiving, with which glorified ſaints extol the amazing wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs of God! The mighty ſatisfaction of being let into the hidden treaſures of his mercy, the exact harmony of his providence, the myſteries of his nature, and his dealings with mankind! O the perfect purity and tranquility of a life free from luſt and paſſion, from doubtful and painful ſtruggles, ever chuſing, ever delighting, in that which is good! O the charms of that entire love and peace, and joint conſent, in honouring and ſerving God, and rejoicing in each others happineſs; void of that envy, jealouſy, and diſcord, that ill nature, ſelf-intereſt, and different opinions, which will not permit us to enjoy a perfect unity in this world! O gracious God, "how plentiful is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee!" That thou ſhouldſt reward their ſhort and imperfect obedience, with ſo great a recompence! they are unprofitable ſervants, and yet thou maketh them ſit down at thy table in the kingdom of heaven. Their ſins and frailties are many; and yet thoſe are remembered no more; their good deeds in compariſon are but few, and yet none of

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theſe are forgotten! Their preſent labours and ſufferings have their intervals and comforts, and are light and ſhort; in compariſon of that future weight of glory, that eternity of interrupted bliſs, which they work out for them. Nor are theſe labourers put off with diſtant proſpects and uneaſy expectations; for no ſooner does night come on, when they can work no longer, but they are called to preſent payment. The combat once ended, and the race run, the conqueror is crowned without delay. This brings me to conſider the bleſſedneſs of good men departed hence.

And that is at the time, when they enter upon their happineſs. "Bleſſed are the dead, which "die in the Lord from henceforth." Without criticiſing on theſe words, it will be ſufficient to obſerve, that both the ſenſe in which I have all along taken them, and alſo of our church in uſing them at the burial of every Chriſtian, do warrant us to conclude that this reſt from labour, and the reward of good works, begin at the inſtant of mens dying in the Lord. The labourers in the vineyard, as ſoon as the even was come, and the duty of the day over, are called to receive their wages. Lazarus immediately upon his death, was "carried by angels into Abraham's boſom, and comforted for the evil things he received in his life-time." St. Paul, mentioning his departure, and reflecting upon the good fight he had fought, declares, "that from thenceforth there was laid up for him a crown of righteouſneſs," moſt probably indeed, this crown is not yet ſo bright, nor the happineſs of Lazarus ſo exquiſite as it will be, at the laſt great day of accounts, when the righteous judge ſhall appear. But ſtill that crown was determined and fixed from the day of the apoſtle's departure; and Lazarus was at leaſt in a condition of comfort; ſuch as made him good amends for the poverty and diſeaſes he had undergone

dergone in his body. So that theſe paſſages plainly confute that fond imagination, which ſome have entertained, of the ſoul's ſleeping in a ſtate of inſenſibility till the general reſurrection. They alſo diſprove that profitable doctrine of the romiſh purgatory, and render prayers for the dead ſuperfluous and uſeleſs. For what need have thoſe dead for our prayers, whom the text pronounces from thenceforth bleſſed? Or, how can they be ſaid to reſt from their labours, who paſs from henceforth into a ſtate of torments, more exquiſite by far than this life can poſſibly endure? And yet ſuch is the popiſh purgatory repreſented. So juſt ground then have we to conclude, that there is no interval, between the end of good mens labours, and the beginning of their reſt; ſo ſubſtantial a reaſon is it of their happineſs, that their works do not only follow them, but go with them, and render the dead bleſſed, from the very moment of their dying in the Lord. I ſhall now draw a few inferences from what has been obſerved.

And we ſhall do well ſeriouſly to conſider, what vaſt encouragement theſe words contain, to recommend a godly life. For we muſt remember, that the glorious privileges we have been treating of, do not belong to all, but only to ſuch as die in the Lord, to thoſe who embrace the faith of Chriſt and live up to the principles of the goſpel, perſevering therein, to the end of their days. But they who refuſe and oppoſe this belief, or who hold it in unrighteouſneſs, their caſe is the reverſe of what I have deſcribed. They are ſo far from finding reſt after their labours, that all the evils they ſuſtain in this world, are light and leſs than nothing, in compariſon of the intolerable, the inconceivable, the infinitely heavier miſeries, reſerved for them in the next. Their works follow them too; but it is to upbraid them with their guilt and impenitence, to

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wound them with ſad and fruitleſs remorſe; to teſtify againſt them in the great day of account, and to condemn them to everlaſting flames. Let me then moſt earneſtly conjure, let me prevail with all that hear me, immediately to ſecure a title to this bleſſedneſs, by breaking off their iniquities from this very moment. This will be beſt done, by poſſeſſing our minds with juſt and worthy notions of the happineſs promiſed in the text; by conſidering what vaſt amends will be made them for all their hardſhips of virtue here. And how wretched an exchange will theſe men make, who indulge the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon, at the vaſt expence, the certain and irrecoverable loſs of their ſouls and eternal happineſs hereafter? The ſevereſt doctrines of the goſpel are fully ſufficient, to enforce their practice, would we but impartially conſider them; and proceed upon the ſame meaſures which human prudence puts us upon, in the affairs of this world. And, alas! what are the affairs of this world, when compared to our ſpiritual concerns? what are the troubled and imperfect joys of ſenſe, which cares and fears, pains and diſaſters innumerable, diſturb; in compariſon of that ſweet and ſure repoſe above, which nothing can annoy? What are the honours, the wealth, the pomp, we here ſo eagerly purſue, if ſet againſt the glories of ſaints, and the inеſtimable treaſures of our heavenly Father's kingdom? Nothing turns to true account, but piety and virtue. No gains are durable but theſe. They are profitable for all things; ſo exceeding profitable, beyond our hopes or imaginations, that had not God the giver of them, aſſured us of this, we could not have been ſo eaſy as to believe, nor ſo preſumptuous as to expect it.

The conſiderations before obſerved, are alſo very proper to arm our minds againſt the fear of death. A paſſion, where it prevails to any great degree,

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is the moſt tyrannical and tormenting. Becauſe, it is perpetually terrifying us with danger, which, with all our induſtry, we cannot poſſibly ſhun. And nothing but Chriſtianity can conquer this domineering evil. But when we conſider, how many things there are to abate our fondneſs for this life; and that they who die in the Lord, are effectually delivered from all theſe; when we look upon death, as a neceſſary paſſage to happineſs, and reflect that the inſtant we ceaſe to be miſerable here, we ſhall take poſſeſſion of a never failing bliſs in another ſtate; this makes it very different from what it is to the wicked or natural man. The ſting of death is ſin, that is, the only thing which renders dying terrible, is the being called to an account for our evil deeds. But the goſpel frees us from the bondage of this fear. It ſhews us a victorious redeemer. One who hath ſatisfied for the ſins of mankind, and thereby triumphed over death. Nay, he hath made it a bleſſing to them that die in him. And this we may all do by the aſſiſtance of his grace, if we diligently ſeek and uſe it. So that this fear is an affliction in our power to correct and moderate, at leaſt we may conquer it as Chriſtians, tho' we cannot wholly remove it as men. For the better we are provided for the approach of death, the leſs troubleſome will the apprehenſions of it be. And a firm proſpect of our future bleſſedneſs, ſhould make us long for that very diſſolution, which now we ſtart and tremble at, and take ſuch vaſt pains to avoid. Again,

Theſe conſiderations afford us the only powerful argument to ſupport us under all the injuries and afflictions of this world. To think, that theſe things cannot laſt long, is ſome, but not a ſufficient conſolation. But to be aſſured that they will turn to our incomparably greater advantage, ſuch as bears no proportion to the utmoſt we can endure here; this is a ſubſtantial ſtay to our ſpirits. To reflect,

reflect, that he who afflicts us, does it for our good, and out of fatherly tenderneſs; that what we complain of is the exerciſe of our virtue, and every freſh tryal a higher ſtep to perfection; that not one ſigh or groan vaniſhes into air, but reaches the ears of the Almighty; not one tear falls to the ground, but all, as David ſays, are put into his bottle; not one injury or affront we ever forgave, but it hath gained us the forgiveneſs of our infinitely more heinous offences againſt God; not one pang or ſickneſs we have patiently gone thro' and with Chriſtian reſignation, but it will be repaid with intereſt in perfect joy. Theſe are the invincible weapons of a good man, ſuch as render him proof againſt all the aſſaults of ill men, and what we call ill fortune. And with the aſſiſtance of theſe, he will find his courage keep up with his faith, and be able to "withſtand in the evil day, and having done "all to ſtand."

Laſtly, what has been obſerved, ought to prevent or check thoſe ſallies of exceſſive grief, which we too often indulge ourſelves in, when it pleaſes God to remove good men, eſpecially our relations and friends out of this world. For thoſe who give a looſe to ſuch paſſions, do not rightly conſider, when they profeſs this concern for ſuch perſons. For why are we ſorry for them? Is it an inſupportable calamity to us, that they whom we moſt dearly loved, are after many painful ſtruggles, at laſt delivered from misfortunes and diſeaſes, from hazards and dangers, from ſorrow and ſin? Do we uſe to weep and lament when our beſt friends eſcape many a terrible ſtorm, and come ſafe to port? And yet this is the caſe of our friends, who die in the Lord. And is the being ſorry for their happineſs, an argument of our love? this is moſt abſurd. Our refuſing to be comforted in ſuch caſes, proceeds from not conſidering how happy they really are? or elſe

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it is out of kindneſs for ourſelves, and not for them. We ought then to be content, that an uſeful neighbour, a darling child, or a tender huſband, ſhould be removed to future bleſſings, tho' we muſt not here longer enjoy their company. And the better the perſon is that is taken from us, the more aſſured hope have we of his obtaining that better life; and this is a powerful argument to reſign ourſelves to theſe ſevere and afflicting tryals. And therefore it well becomes us, to exhort the ſurviving relations of the deceaſed, to dry up their tears; and from the dark ſide of ſuch inſtances of afflicting providence, to turn themſelves rather to the bright proſpect of this happy change.

What remains then is, for us to endeavour to copy after ſuch good examples, as are the moſt excellent; that when we are called upon, as ſhortly we ſhall, we may with holy truſt, and ſteady ſubmiſſion to God's will, commit ourſelves into the hands of our moſt merciful creator and redeemer. Let us imitate the commendable actions, reſemble the meek temper and good diſpoſition of departing pious Chriſtians, that ſo we may in God's due time meet our deareſt friends and relations again, at a joyful and bleſſed reſurrection. Even then, when all thoſe "who have died in the Lord, ſhall ſhine "as the brightneſs of the firmament; when theſe "vile bodies of ours ſhall be faſhioned after "Chriſt's glorious body," to live and reign with him for ever and ever.

Diſcourſe CXX. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

The USEFULNESS of CONSIDERING our LATTER END.

Pſalm xc. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom.

THE Chaldee paraphraſe calls the xcth pſalm "The prayer which Moſes; the prophet of the Lord, prayed, when the people of the houſe of Iſrael ſinned in the wilderneſs;" and which contains a devout meditation on the ſhortneſs and frailty of human life. To be aſſured that our life ſhall not exceed a certain term, as was the caſe of the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, is an awaking thing, and commonly more rouſes men, than the general conſideration of our own frailty and mortality. And yet to a wiſe, conſiderate man, it ought in reaſon to be the ſame. For that which will certainly be, ought to be thought on and provided for; whether it be at ſome diſtance, or the next moment, we ſhould always be in a readineſs, for fear of a ſurprize. This prayer then, is as proper for us, as it was for Moſes and the Iſraelites, tho' we are not in the very ſame circumſtances. They were under a peremptory ſentence of death within forty years, but might be ſooner taken away; which is not much different from our caſe. For we are liable to death every day, nay, every moment of time.

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So that it is as fit for us to pray, as it was for Moſes and the Iſraelites, that God would "teach "us ſo to number our days," ſo to remember the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of our lives, and ſo to conſider our latter end, "that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom;" That we may manage and conduct this frail, ſhort, and uncertain life, in the beſt manner and to the wiſeſt purpoſes. I ſhall at preſent endeavour to ſhew by ſeveral particulars, what influence and effect the ſerious conſideration ofour latter end, and the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of this preſent life, ought in reaſon to have upon us.

And the meditation of our latter end ſhould make us duly conſider our nature and its duration. It is true wiſdom to underſtand ourſelves, and the nature of our beings, of what we conſiſt, and for what duration we are deſigned.—Whether we ſhall die like beaſts; or whether there is an immortal ſpirit within us; which hath no dependance on matter, the bodily and viſible part of ourſelves, but is a much better and more enduring ſubſtance; which hath in it no principle of corruption, but ſhall ſurvive theſe periſhing bodies, and when they are mouldered into duſt, ſhall ſubſiſt in a happy or miſerable condition, according as we have behaved in this world. Theſe are two very different ſchemes of things, which ought to affect and inſpire us with different ſentiments and reſolutions, and to put us on a quite contrary method and conduct of our lives. For if we are certain, that we ſhall be utterly extinguiſhed by death, like the beaſts that periſh, then we have nothing to take care of but our bodies; then we need not extend our thoughts, hopes or fears, beyond this preſent life; having nothing to do but to pleaſe ourſelves with preſent enjoyments, and ſo to live as may beſt promote our temporal quiet, ſatisfaction, and ſecurity. But then we

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ſhould well conſider, whether theſe things are really ſo, and may be depended on; whether theſe principles will not fail us when we moſt need their comfort and ſupport, and when death approaches, will not vaniſh and diſappear. To be well aſſured of this, is of infinite conſequence to us, becauſe thereon depends our happineſs or miſery to all eternity. Therefore nothing leſs than the demonſtration of the impoſſibility of our having immortal ſpirits, that ſhall ſurvive our bodies, and be extremely happy or miſerable in another world, ſhould be ſatisfactory to us, in a caſe ſo dangerous, and on which ſo much depends. For if there is a poſſibility of our having immortal ſouls, that ſhall live forever hereafter, nothing can acquit us from the greateſt imprudence, if we neglect to provide for that beſt part of ourſelves, which is of eternal duration. And if the ſuppoſition of the ſoul's immortality, is infinitely moſt probable, as beſt agreeing with the notions which all men have of God and his providence; with the natural deſires, hopes, and fears of mankind; and as moſt ſuitable to the capacities, expectations, and general ſentiments of wiſe men in all ages; then it is infinitely more ſafe and wiſe, to proceed on this ſuppoſition, and to act agreeably thereto. So that if we have immortal ſouls, which ſhall live and continue forever, we ought to conſider our whole life and its duration. And if we do ſo, we ſhould never employ our care and time about the worſt and moſt ignoble part of ourſelves, and make proviſion only for the few days of our pilgrimage here on earth, without regarding the eternal duration of another world.

The ſerious conſideration of this ſhould make us careful of our ſouls, and concerned for eternity. And in order to ſecure the happineſs of that ſtate, we muſt work out our ſalvation, with great care and diligence; that we may avoid the miſery and

obtain the happineſs of another world; there being no compariſon between the goods and evils of this life and the next. Let us then conſider, and ſhew ourſelves men; let us not ſo conduct our affairs, as to mind that leaſt which concerns us moſt. We cannot commit a greater miſtake, than to imagine, that our great buſineſs in this world, is to mind temporal things. And yet moſt men run into this miſtake, not only at their firſt ſetting out, but perſiſt in it all their days. As if their great and main concern was to pleaſe themſelves for the preſent, and to provide for this world, as if they were always to live in it; not remembering that they have immortal ſouls, which ſhall ſurvive their bodies, and again be re-united to them, to live forever in a ſtate of happineſs or miſery, according as they have taken care to ſecure the one, and avoid the other. And,

The thoughts of our latter end ſhould make us very ſerious and compoſed in our ſpirits. For if we have immortal ſouls as well as dying bodies; if we ſhall live forever, and the happineſs of all eternity depends on the right improvement of our time, and our behaviour in this world; then it is no trifling buſineſs, no ſmall concern, how we live during our abode here. Whom do not the lively thoughts of death, and its near approaches, make grave and ſerious, much wiſer and more conſiderate than at any other time of their lives? They can then tell, how they ought to have lived, and improved their time, and what uſe they would make of it, would God prolong it to them. The near view of another world, is an amazing thing, and apt to inſpire us with good thoughts and reſolutions. And why ſhould not the clear proſpect of it at a diſtance, and the aſſured belief thereof, have the ſame affect on us, to make us ſeriouſly and in good earneſt mind the things which belong to our peace, and to wait

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with patience, till our change shall come. And to engage us to a constant watchfulness, the great judge of the world hath concealed from us both the time of the general judgment, and of our particular summons out of this world, that we may not be unprovided for what may happen at any time, and which will concern us forever.

The meditation of our latter end should also make us vigorous and industrious in the business of religion, and the salvation of our souls. If we look on this as the great end and design of our living here, and the main scope of all our actions, it will make our whole lives consistent and of a piece; because our thoughts, cares, and endeavours, will be united in one great end and design. Serious thoughts thereof will tend to excite our diligence and industry, when we consider how great a work we have to do, and how little time to perform it in. It is not an easy work for a man to become good and fit for heaven; it requires time and care, great watchfulness over ourselves, much struggling, and many conflicts with our evil inclinations, which even after they are conquered will often rally and make head again; also a stout resistance of temptations, an obstinate resolution against them, and a patient continuance in well doing. The consideration whereof should make us very careful and diligent to acquire all those graces, virtues, and good dispositions, which may fit and prepare us for eternity; it should move us to do all the good, and be as good as we can, while we have opportunity; because this is the time and season to lay the foundation of our future happiness; "for as we sow, so shall we reap. He that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that sows plentifully, shall reap plentifully." Every de ree of virtue and goodness that we attain to here, will meet with a suitable reward, a m re resplendent degree of glory and hap-

pineſs in the next life. And if we have made religion the great care and buſineſs of our lives, if we have been diligent to work out our own ſalvation; when we come to die, we ſhall have nothing to do but to renew our repentance for the errors and miſcarriages of our lives, to beg God's pardon and forgiveneſs of them, for the ſake of the meritorious obedience and ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour; to comfort ourſelves in the goodneſs and promiſes of God, and in the glorious hopes of the happineſs we are ready to poſſeſs; and in the mean time, to exerciſe faith and patience, till death finally end the ſorrows and miſeries of this life. Again,

The meditation of our latter end ſhould make us frequently to exerciſe and renew our repentance; becauſe we daily offend and provoke God, if not by ſins of commiſſion, yet of omiſſion and neglect, and by the imperfection of our beſt actions and ſervices. If not by preſumptuous ſins, committed againſt knowledge, yet by manifold ſins of ignorance and infirmity; ſo that the beſt of us may every day ſay with David, "who can underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou me from my ſecret faults. If thou ſhouldſt be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, O Lord, who can ſtand." And thus by exerciſing a frequent, if not daily repentance, we may in a good meaſure keep our accounts even, without being in confuſion at our death; when we know not where to begin our repentance, nor how to perform it in ſo ſhort a time, and in circumſtances of ſo much weakneſs and diſtraction. Whoever frequently attends perſons on their ſick-beds, muſt have ſeen many in ſuch wretched circumſtances, as not to know what to do; deſirous to repent, but what thro' weakneſs of body, horror and confuſion of mind, not able to attempt it; lamenting that they neglected it in their health, and deſpairing of doing it then with any ſucceſs and acceptance.—Theſe

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are ſad ſpectacles indeed, and ought to be loud warnings to all who are in health, and have the opportunity of repentance, to ſet about this neceſſary work, even to-day, "leſt any of us be hardened thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin."

The conſideration of the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of life, ſhould make us great huſbands of our time, which, next to our immortal ſouls, is the moſt precious and valuable thing in the world. As nothing will comfort us more when we come to die, than the remembrance of a well ſpent life, carefully employed in the ſervice of God, and for the benefit of men; ſo there is nothing for which our conſciences will then more bitterly reproach us, than for an uſeleſs and unprofitable, a wicked and vicious life. And our time being very uncertain, we ſhould therefore improve the preſent moment to the beſt advantage. It is ſhort in itſelf, and more ſo in reſpect of the great work we have to do. To prevent the manifold diſtempers of our minds, to preſerve our ſouls from the contagion of ſin, to keep them free from the diſorders of our appetites and paſſions, requires a wiſe conduct, a very careful, prudent management of ourſelves. Evil and inveterate habits are not maſtered in an inſtant, nor the contrary virtues in any great degree attained, but by long practice. There muſt be time, patience, and perſeverance, for the doing theſe things, and we muſt give "all diligence, to add to our faith "knowledge," and every inſtance and degree of virtue; ſince without this, nothing can afford us true comfort in the hour of death, and make us "to lift up our hands with joy, in the day of judgment." The conſideration of this, ſhould make us careful to neglect no opportunity of doing good; and reſtrain us from waſting too many hours in diverſions and viſits, which are great devourers of time, and inſenſibly take us off from that ſerious temper o

mind, which we ought to have for the concerns of another world. It ſhould make us prefer the doing our duty, and the keeping a good conſcience, to all temporal conſiderations whatſoever, whether of fame, wealth, honour, or power. As for pleaſure, there is little in this world true and ſincere, beſides that of performing our duty, and doing good. A good conſcience is a continual feaſt. And he certainly is beſt pleaſed, and moſt eaſy in his mind, who is conſcious he endeavours to do all the good he can.

The meditation of our mortality ſhould likewiſe teach us the real value of all temporal enjoyments, ſo as to be indifferent in the uſe of them. And nothing can more conduce thereto, than the conſideration of their uncertainty, and the ſhortneſs of our lives. For if we ſuppoſe, that they and we ſhould continue ſome years, yet there will at laſt be an end of them or us. And there can be no permanent happineſs, no true felicity, where there can be either ſorrow, or an end of our joy. Beſides, all things in this world afford but little happineſs; we cannot do well without them, and very indifferently with them. Moſt of this world's enjoyments, are very dangerous, and always attended with inconveniencies. When we have all we can wiſh for, we are ſtill uneaſy; either ſomething troubles, or nothing pleaſes us. Fulneſs gives us pain, long enjoyment of any thing ſatiates and cloys us. Why then ſhould we ſo highly eſteem theſe temporary, tranſient enjoyments, or rather amuſements, which afford ſo little content and ſatisfaction when we have them; ſo much grief and trouble when we loſe them? Conſidering then how ſoon we muſt, and how ſuddenly we may leave this world, and all its enjoyments, we have not the leaſt reaſon to ſet our hearts much upon them. The thoughts of this ſhould alſo make us contented with our preſent

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condition, and patient under all evils and afflictions. For the short time of our abode here, a little may content us, since we do not expect our rest and happiness in this world. If our condition is tolerable, we have reason to be contented; if mean and uneasy, it cannot last long. This should silence our murmurings, and check our discontent. And as to the greatest evils and afflictions of this life, it should make us patient, to consider they will soon have an end. Either they will cease, or make an end of us; and all our patience will have a reward, far beyond our sufferings. The afflictions and sufferings of this life will not last always; they are not like the torments of hell, either in degree or duration, which are without intermission, and without end.

Lastly, the meditation of our latter end, should put us on a careful, continual, and particular preparation for the time of our death. And the sooner we set about it the better; because when this is done, we shall rescue ourselves from that state of bondage, to which the continual fear of death makes most men subject. Nothing so much abates the terrors of death, as a due preparation for it; let it come sooner or later, to a well prepared mind it makes no difference. But the longer we delay this necessary work, the more unwilling shall we be, and unfit to set about it. Old age and sickness are times very improper to prepare for death, to begin our repentance, and change a bad life. He that prepares not for death, before it draws near him, or that he lies on a sick bed, is like one who begins to study the art of navigation, not till he has occasion to put it in practice; just as his vessel is driven among rocks, and every moment is in danger of being dashed to pieces. Let this then be established as a rule and certain principle, that the best and surest preparation for a happy and comfortable death,

is a holy and good life. Nothing will ſo much diſarm death of its terrors, as a clear conſcience, a ſincere deſire and endeavour to pleaſe God in the general courſe of our lives, and a ſincere repentance for all paſt errors and miſcarriages. And tho' our life is ſhort and uncertain, yet if we begin early, and well manage our time; if we are always moving and preſſing forward, we may do a great deal by way of preparation for another world. But the misfortune is, the main buſineſs for which men came into the world, namely, to repent of their ſins, reform their lives, make their peace with God, and in good time prepare for an eternity, are not thought of by them, till they are juſt going out of it. This, which ought to be the firſt and greateſt concern for their lives, is forgotten and deferred to the laſt. I ſhall conclude all with ſome particular directions concerning our preparation for death.

We ſhould then by frequent meditation accuſtom ourſelves to the thought of it. This will help us to tame this monſter, render it more familiar to us, and take off the dread of it. We ſhould alſo endeavour to mitigate the evil and terror of death, by conſidering the evils and miſeries of life. When we look on death as a remedy for all the evils of life, we ſhall then begin to be reconciled to it, and if we are wiſe, ſhall be glad to get out of the noiſe, danger, and ſufferings, to which we are here liable; and be even thankful to God, that we were born to die, and for putting an end to this miſerable life, that we may begin one more happy, which ſhall never have an end. So that whenever God ſhall think fit to releaſe and diſmiſs us hence, we ought to eſteem it a favour. And by way of farther preparation for death, we ſhould endeavour always to maintain a lively ſenſe of it in our minds, that ſo we may be as much under the power of it as if it was juſt approaching; as if the phyſician or

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udge had paſſed ſentence of death upon us. We ſhould be always thinking on that which may happen the next moment; if we do ſo, we can never be extremely ſurpriſed; but "whenever our Lord comes, we ſhall be found watching." And that we may the more effectually do this, we ſhould make it our conſtant prayer to God, that he would fit us for our diſſolution, aſſiſt and comfort us in that needful time, without whoſe gracious aid and ſupport, both phyſicians and the miniſters of God, are but miſerable comforters. It ſhould be our daily petition to God, "that he would enable us to perform this laſt act of our life with decency and conſtancy of mind, that neither our diſeaſe nor our weakneſs may break the firmneſs of our ſpirits, and leave us to be amazed with fear, or betrayed with peeviſhneſs, ſo as to render us uneaſy to ourſelves or friends." More eſpecially when God thinks fit, either by the nature or preſent danger of our diſtemper, to give us a nearer ſummons of our mortality; we ſhould then be careful to impreſs on our minds, a deep and more lively ſenſe of another world, in order to quicken our pace, and "to work the work of him that ſent us into the world, while it is day; becauſe the night is coming when no man can work."

Nature indeed is fond of life, apt to deſire a longer continuance here, and to uſe many delays and excuſes to ſtay a little longer in this world. And yet a long life, with its uſual burdens and infirmities, is ſeldom deſirable; for it is but the ſame thing over again, or worſe. So many more days and nights, ſummers and winters, a repetition of the ſame pleaſures, only with leſs pleaſure and reliſh; a return of the ſame or greater pains and troubles, but having leſs patience and ſtrength to bear them. Let us then be of good courage in the approaches of death, ſince we ſee land at at diſtance, and that the

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ſtorm we are in will quickly be over, and then it will be as if it had never been, or rather the remembrance thereof will afford us much pleaſure.

And ſhould it pleaſe God to exerciſe us with great pains or tedious ſickneſs, we ſhould make uſe of all the conſiderations, which reaſon and religion can afford, to mitigate and alleviate our ſufferings, and to make a ſhort way a little more ſmooth and eaſy. The beſt of us have no privilege and exemption from the common accidents of humanity; for no piety can certainly ſecure to us an eaſy and comfortable death. In this, as in all things, we muſt reſign ourſelves to God's good pleaſure, and ſubmit to him, the time, manner, and all other circumſtances of our departure hence; whether our ſun ſhall ſet in a cloud, or ſhine brighteſt when going down. But however it ſets, ſtill it is the ſun, the fountain of light, and will riſe glorioufly. There are alway's the ſeeds of joy and comfort in a good man's conſcience, and tho' buried for a while, they will again ſpring forth. "Light is ſown for the "righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart." I will conclude all in the words of Moſes, "O that "all were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they "would conſider their latter end."

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe CXXI. Dr. *Benj. Calamy.*

The HAZARD of a DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

Numb. xxiii. 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.

THO' wicked men will not be at the pains of living the life, yet they wiſh and deſire to die the death of the righteous, and to have their latter end like his. As much as men love their ſins, yet they would not willingly be damned for them; they cannot endure to think ſeriouſly of paſſing from this world in an impenitent ſtate. The fears of another world will often occur, to torment the ſinner, and make his thoughts troubleſome to him. An uneaſy bed, a broken ſleep, a ſudden affliction, an hand-writing on the wall, will ſometimes force us, whether we will or no, to ſmite on our breaſts, and reflect ſadly upon our paſt ſins, and the fatal iſſue of them; nay, our own conſcience will fly in our face, notwithſtanding all our arts to divert or lull it aſleep. That which makes makes men ſo neglectful of their immortal concerns, ſo pleaſant whilſt they live in known ſins, is, that they depend on God's goodneſs, for time and opportunity of repenting either in a lingering ſickneſs, or declining old age. They are perhaps now young and healthful, ſtrong and luſty; their blood moves briſkly, their ſpirits are active and lively, without any ſymptoms of approaching ſickneſs: Therefore they think it will be time enough to look after another life, when

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their ſtrength decays, and death makes its near approach. Was this true, there would be two ways to heaven; one by "living righteouſly, and "godly, and ſoberly in this preſent world:" The other, by tepenting at our death, of a wicked life. And it is eaſy to ſuppoſe which way the greateſt part of men would chuſe. Was this true we might have both the pleaſure of being wicked, and the hopes of being ſaved; we might then ſpare ourſelves all the trouble of religion, and yet not miſs its reward. We might ſpend our days in pleaſure, gratify every vain humour and appetite; deny ourſelves nothing that our luſts and paſſions crave, live without God in the world, and yet at laſt die in the Lord.

There is not any thing that ſo notoriouſly defeats the deſign of our Saviour's coming into the world, and renders our Chriſtianity ſo uſeleſs to us, as this one preſumption; that the whole of religion, or all that is neceſſary to ſalvation, may be performed upon a ſick or death-bed; for if it may be done as well then as before, what need we attempt it ſooner? what need we diſquiet ourſelves in vain, about the exerciſes of virtue and piety, or maintain a painful and ungrateful conflict, with the inclinations and inordiate cravings of our fleſh; when by lamenting at any time our ſins, and truſting to the performances of Jeſus Chriſt, we may be as ſecure of paradiſe, as if we had all our days "kept a conſcience void of "offence, both towards God and towards men?" ſince in this we run no other hazard, but that of dying ſuddenly, which happens to very few. As eternal bliſs and happineſs is a thing of ſuch vaſt moment to us, that to defer making proviſion for it, but one day, is certainly a very great indiſcretion; ſo for a man to devote all his days to his own pleaſure and humour, and reſerve for God, for whoſe ſervice he was born, but one day only, and that the worſt

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and the last, this is perfect madness, the utmost stupidity. The extreme folly and danger of which, I shall endeavour to evince by several particulars: and let us consider,

How little can be done by a wicked man on his sick or death-bed? the whole of a death-bed repentance is generally no more than a few good words and wishes, a superficial confession of sin and wickedness, some broken prayers and pious expressions to the minister, who then perhaps shall be sent for, however before despised; and it may be receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which he wholly neglected when in health: This, with a legacy of his ill gotten goods to charitable uses, is, in common esteem, making a good Christian end. As I am willing to allow the denying penitent all advantages, and to consider his repentance in the very best circumstances; I shall not instance in such as are violently and suddenly hurried out of the world, in the midst of their wickedness, and have hardly time so much as to beg mercy at God's hands: nor yet in those who are taken with such diseases, as render them incapable of any rational thoughts; and yet these are cases that often happen. For there are many who intend when they come to die, to call to mind their wicked ways, and be extremely sorrowful for them; but their sickness is of that sort, as to deprive them of memory and understanding: So that when they are seriously to consider their past life, alas! they remember not one thing good or bad. The time which they fixed to prepare for another world is come, but their distemper proves such, that instead of dying very piously and wisely, perhaps they depart raving mad. I shall therefore omit these, and the like considerations, and only put the case of one who dies leisurely and by degrees, who retains his memory and understanding to the last, and is able in some measure

ſure, to recount all his former wickedneſs. And yet what can ſuch an one do towards the ſecuring his everlaſting ſalvation? For,

Suppoſe he may be truly ſorrowful, for what he hath done amiſs, and the remembrance of his evil ways is very bitter and grievous to him; yet it is hard to think, that his mind ſhould on a ſudden be really altered; (I ſpeak of ſuch as have delighted in ſin and vanity, and hated nothing ſo much as piety and virtue;) that ſuch men's judgments ſhould be ſo wonderfully changed, as immediately to lay aſide all their former prejudices againſt goodneſs and righteouſneſs; and be reconciled in a moment to what they have ſo long declared open enmity againſt; that juſt a little before they die, they ſhould become as abſolutely of another mind, as if they were in truth other men. For a man at once to think, believe, judge, and act quite contrary to what he hath thought, believed, and done, for forty, fifty, or ſixty years, is really incredible. So that in truth, the grief and ſorrow of a dying penitent, is no other, than that of every common malefactor, who when he is ready to receive the puniſhment of his crimes, is then very angry with himſelf, for what he hath done. He is ſorry and troubled, not that he ſinned, but that he cannot eſcape ſuffering for it; it grieves him to think he can now ſin no longer, that all the pleaſure of it is paſt, and nothing remains, but a ſad reckoning and account. So that if wicked men are confounded at the ſenſe of their guilt, when they come to die, yet this is more the effect of thoſe fears and horrors, they at ſuch times feel, than of any true, ſincere repentance. But if the dying penitent moſt earneſtly begs God's pardon, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, pleading his merits and ſatisfaction, yet this is but to mock God, who thinks it enough to aſk him forgiveneſs with the remainder and laſt drawing of their breath.

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For what do they otherwiſe, that die this kind of well-dying, but ſay unto God, we beſeech thee, O Lord, that all the falſhood, forſwearing, and treachery of our life paſt, may be pleaſing to thee, and acceptable in thy ſight; that thou wilt for our ſakes, (who had no leiſure to do any thing for thine) change thy nature and forget to be a juſt God; that thou wouldſt love injuries and oppreſſion, call ambition wiſdom, and charity fooliſhneſs. Certainly they who depend upon ſuch prayers, have either found out a new God, or made one.

And ſhould he back his prayer with reſtitution of all that he hath gotten unjuſtly, and with charity to the poor, and forgiveneſs of all the injuries he hath received from other men (which are excellent beginnings of a new life, if done in time) yet there can be no virtue or praiſe in reſtoring that which we can no longer keep, or in giving away what we muſt neceſſarily part with. And as for pardoning injuries received, alas! wicked men, in their life-time, take preſent pay, immediate revenge; there being not one injury done them, that they have not fully returned. Laſtly, the utmoſt that a ſick or dying ſinner can do, is to make ſtrong and ſincere reſolutions againſt his former evil courſes, and to walk in all virtue and godlineſs, ſhould God continue his life. This is what men uſually truſt to in this extremity, they hope God will accept of ſuch unfeigned reſolutions, for repentance. But let us conſider, that there is nothing more eaſy than to reſolve well, eſpecially when we are under fear; that there is nothing ſo difficult which men will not readily promiſe to perform, if thereby they may but deliver themſelves from a preſſing and imminent danger. But yet how hard do we find it by daily experience, to keep cloſe and conſtant to thoſe religious reſolutions, which we make even in the time of our health and vigour, and that upon the moſt

ſerious deliberation? How many have we known, who in ſickneſs and under the fears and apprehenſions of death, have by moſt ſolemn, and no doubt ſincere vows, obliged themſelves to walk in better ways; and yet, as ſoon as reſtored to health, have preſently "returned like the dog to the vomit, or "the ſow to her wallowing in the mire?" The only time then of making good and laſting reſolutions of living well, is when we can examine indifferently and determine impartially, when our judgments are good, and our paſſions quick. But all the purpoſes of ſick men, are moſt commonly like the vows of a mariner in a great tempeſt, which vaniſh away and are forgotten upon altering of the weather. Thus the ungodly man's reſolutions are juſt according to the degree of danger he is in; ſo long as there are hopes of recovery, his intentions of amendment are weak and ſlender; but as death comes near, his reſolutions encreaſe, and get ſtrength; and when he finds little hopes of living any longer, then he ſtrenuouſly reſolves to live better; that is, he promiſes and vows to do, what according to his own fears and opinion, is impoſſible to be done. And can we think God will accept of ſuch a purpoſe of living well, founded on no other conſideration or motive, than that a perſon believes his life is juſt gone?

But ſuppoſe the dying man reſolves to leave all his ſins; yet, alas! he hath entertained them ſo long, that they are not ſo eaſily parted with! even good men ſpend a great part of their time, in moſt hearty and frequent begging the divine aſſiſtance, in uſing their utmoſt endeavours to conquer and ſubdue their unruly paſſions; and even wicked men complain enough of the difficulty of this. What more common with them, than to ſay, it is impoſſible to reſiſt the allurements of good company, the charms of beauty, or the temptations of gain and honour?

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Nay, do they not often try to excuſe themſelves in many ſins, by pleading that they are ſo uſed to them, that they cannot poſſibly leave them? For inſtance, that they ſwear before they think of it; that they cannot reſtrain their paſſion when provoked; that they have tried to break off ſome lewd cuſtoms, and have prevailed for a while, but that then they have returned upon them with greater violence; and can they then think this ſo eaſy when they come to die, that a good reſolution and a few prayers, ſhall in an hour, or a day, ſo vanquiſh ſin in general, as to qualify them to appear before God?

When therefore men make ſuch reſolutions of amendment, they reſolve they know not what, for it is a work of great time and patience: It requires long conſideration, aſſiduous watchfulneſs, and unwearied diligence, to extripate thoſe inveterate habits, which by a long wicked life we have contracted. To mortify thoſe luſts that have ſo long tyrannized and domineered over us, is a work that muſt be done by degrees. There is very little regard therefore to be given to ſuch haſty reſolutions, as are violently extorted from us, by great and preſent fear; and be they never ſo ſtrong and ſincere, yet ſtill there is a great difference between reſolving and performing. Beſides, why ſhould that be thought ſufficient to ſave us at the laſt gaſp, which all agree is not ſufficient to put us in a ſtate of ſalvation, whilſt we continue well and in health? Wiſhes and purpoſes made in the time of our ſtrength do not alone make a bad man good; why then ſhould they alone be ſufficient on our death-bed? I proceed,

To conſider how far ſhort all this comes of what the holy ſcriptures require as the indiſpenſible conditions of ſalvation. For ſhould all which a wicked man may do upon his death-bed amount to repentance, yet where is obedience to the laws of the goſpel? As for thoſe indeed who in the ſincerity

of their hearts have done God's will, their repentance ſhall be accepted for what they have fallen ſhort in, and which the beſt of us all have need to lament. But certainly a ſhort repentance at laſt, was never intended, to anſwer for an univerſal diſobedience and a whole life of wickedneſs. Repentance from dead works, and reſolutions of a godly life, are required as a preparative for Chriſtianity, and are therefore neceſſary in adult perſons even before their baptiſm; but then by our Chriſtian profeſſion, which we take upon us in baptiſm, we are obliged to a new life, to all manner of purity and righteouſneſs; wherein we expreſsly promiſe to walk in God's holy commandments all our days; the keeping whereof is abſolutely neceſſary for the obtaining our future reward. This I ſhall illuſtrate briefly thus: The ways of virtue and righteouſneſs, and of ſin and wickedneſs, are two roads that are perfectly oppoſite, and directly contrary to each other. Suppoſe then a man, for a great reward, is obliged in one day, to travel ſo many miles northward, but preſuming he hath time enough to do this in, he travels the quite contrary way, and goes ſouthward; at laſt, all on a ſudden, when the ſun is juſt ready to ſet, and night comes on apace, then he begins to conſider, how much he is out of his way; and finding himſelf weary and unfit for travel, and lamenting his own folly in loſing his reward, promiſeth if he were to begin again, he would go directly to the place commanded. But ought this man to have the promiſed reward? ſince before he can challenge that, he muſt firſt return back to the point from whence he ſet out, and even then he has his whole journey ſtill to go. This is juſt the caſe of a wicked man upon his death-bed; he is not only to unravel all his former works, to break off all his lewd cuſtoms, to mortify all his fooliſh paſſions, and unruly luſts, to forſake all his deadly ſins, and

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to repent of his paſt ill ſpent life; but he is then to live a new life, to accuſtom himſelf to the practice of goodneſs, and to make it habitual to him. His mind is then to be furniſhed with all Chriſtian virtues and graces, he hath his whole race ſtill to run, and his ſalvation to work out; and is the leaſt part of this poſſible to be done on a languiſhing bed of ſickneſs?

If we make religion the buſineſs of our whole lives, and in every thing exerciſe ourſelves to keep a conſcience unblameable; yet when we come to die, we ſhall find work enough to employ us. To behave decently and as becomes Chriſtians in ſuch a condition, patiently to bear our affliction, chearfully to ſubmit to God's will, to beg pardon for our manifold failings and miſcarriages, readily to leave this world, and all that is dear to us in it; theſe and many more are the exerciſes of a Chriſtian on a bed of ſickneſs. And how few are there that are then able to bear up with any tolerable courage? We do not count him a wiſe man, that will leave ſo much as his worldly affairs at that time unſettled. And when our very natural powers and faculties are diſabled, when our bodies are full of pain, and our minds of diſtractions and perplexities; how ſhall we be able to do all that work, for which our whole life is little enough, and for which alone we were born into this world? This the devil ſubtilly foreſees, and if he can but prevail with men to put off the care of religion, till a ſick bed, he will then find other employment for them. And as before in their life-time, he told them is was too ſoon, ſo then he will ſuggeſt that it is too late to repent and turn to God. Let thoſe who think of deferring their repentance till a death-bed, ſometimes viſit ſick perſons; let them look on their condition, when they lie a dying, and then judge, whether that be a fit time to do ſo great a work in? They

may then ſee how troubled and diſturbed their thoughts and minds as well as bodies are; how faſt their reaſon and underſtanding decay; how their memories are loſt, their ſenſes fail them, and how unable to help themſelves. And is this a time to prepare for eternity; to vanquiſh all ſins, and to obtain all grace? Is this the fitteſt opportunity we can chuſe, to make our peace with God, to ſue out our pardon, and to perform all thoſe duties of piety, mercy, juſtice and charity, in which we have been hitherto defective? or rather are not they then happy, who at ſuch a time have nothing elſe to do, but to die? Would we but take the opinion of thoſe who are themſelves in this condition, and be moved by their judgments, they will give teſtimony to the truth of what has been ſaid. Do not they when ſuprized by death, offer all their goods and ſubſtance, for which they have ſo long and vainly laboured, to procure, if poſſible, ſome longer time, tho' it was but a ſhort truce, and little reſpite? What are they not willing to give, on condition that God would ſpare them yet "a little while before "they go hence, and be no more ſeen?" Did you ever hear of any dying penitent, that did not a thouſand times wiſh he had begun ſooner? And how earneſtly do ſuch warn every one by their example, to take heed of truſting to a death-bed repentance? But,

The laſt thing proper to be conſidered is, what hopes or encouragement God hath given us, to believe, that he will abate of thoſe conditions, which are required in the goſpel. Now tho' the conditions of ſalvation are the ſame to perſons ſick and dying, as to men in health; and that both are under the ſame covenant, and the ſame actual obedience is required of all under equal penalties; yet there are two inſtances commonly mentioned in favour of a death-bed repentance. The one is that

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of the labourers, "who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, and yet received equal wages with thoſe that came in at the firſt, and had borne the heat of the day." But it is to be obſerved,

That theſe labourers came in as ſoon as they were called and invited; had they been offered work, and all the day refuſed, and only at laſt, juſt in the cloſe of the evening, been willing to have worked, this had been ſomething like the caſe of Chriſtians delaying repentance, till they are juſt ſummoned to give an account. But this parable rather repreſents the caſe of an heathen man, that never heard of Chriſt, or his religion, till juſt before his death; whoſe coming into the church ſo late, ſhall not therefore hinder his receiving a full reward. But this is by no means the condition of thoſe, who having made a covenant with Chriſt in baptiſm, and afterwards moſt notoriouſly failed in performing what they promiſed; do then only return to their ſervice "when the night is come, in which no man can work." He that came in at the eleventh hour was under no engagement to work any ſooner; he had no where promiſed it, nor had the maſter commanded it, and therefore he was without fault. And he who came in at the eleventh hour did yet work one hour, which tho' but a ſhort time, yet is very different from that man's, who comes in but at the twelfth, which is the caſe of all death-bed penitents.

The other inſtance often named in favour of a death-bed repentance is, that of the thief on the croſs; a caſe ſo very miraculous, and extraordinary, that the like never can be expected again, unleſs our bleſſed Lord ſhould once more deſcend from heaven, and ſuffer in company with ſome condemned ſinner; who had ſuch a wonderful repentance and faith as his was. But this example affords

but little comfort to thoſe, who have for many years profeſſed the religion of Jeſus, and yet deferred the practice of it, till their death.

But ſome will ſay, is there then no hopes, no remedy? what muſt a wicked man do when he happens to be thus ſurprized by death? I am far from taking upon me to limit the mercies of God; they are over all his works, and are as infinite as himſelf. Such perſons therefore, as have ſpent their days in luxury, profaneneſs, and contempt of all religion, but at laſt humbly beg pardon, heartily promiſe, and reſolve amendment; we muſt leave to his goodneſs, pity, and gracious compaſſion, who tho' he ties us up to rules, yet is not himſelf bound by them, and who may do more for us than he hath any where promiſed. And therefore perſons in ſuch circumſtances ought to be encouraged and quickened, to do all that they can, and to ſubmit themſelves to God's good pleaſure. All that can be ſaid to ſuch men is, that the greater and more remarkable their repentance is, the more hopes there will be of their forgiveneſs. But certain it is, that God hath no where expreſsly declared that he will accept of all our ſorrows, ſubmiſſions, promiſes, and reſtitutions, made on a ſick bed; all theſe do not amount to what is the plain condition of the covenant of grace. Indeed what God may do none can ſay, but he hath plainly enough told us what we are to do; and it is the greateſt madneſs in the world, to run ſo great a hazard, as that we cannot be ſaved without a diſpenſation from the ordinary rule. "Do I ſay (ſaith St. Auguſtine) ſuch an one ſhall be damned? I dare not. Do I ſay, he ſhall be ſaved? I cannot. What ſay I then? Will you free yourſelf from all uncertainty in this matter? Repent now whilſt you are in health; forſake your ſins whilſt you are able to commit them, and then you are ſure of pardon." There is indeed another church

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in the world that can teach men how to be saved on a death-bed, even without repentance; who hath found out ways to make it very easy for any ungodly wretch to secure himself from hell, by less than half an hour's work; but we have not so learned Christ, nor dare we give men certain assurance of everlasting life, on any other terms, than of a constant, habitual obedience to the laws of the gospel. The only certain way to die well, is to live well.

Nor shall I go about to determine how much of our life must be spent in the practice of righteousness and goodness, before we can be said to have lived well; since this varies according to the circumstances of men, which are infinite: however, I think this may safely be said, that so much time of our life ought to be spent in the practice of goodness, as will be necessary to make us holy, humble, pure, meek, patient, just, temperate, lovers of God and men; for the gospel does not promise eternal life and glory to any but persons thus qualified; and it is certain, that a few pious wishes, prayers and purposes, made at our death, will not suffice to denominate us such. God doth not watch just how men die, but he will judge every man according to his works, and the deeds he hath done in the flesh; and those dispositions we have nourished, loved, and delighted in all our life, will follow and attend us to another world.

To conclude, let us not judge nor censure others whose lives we may have been acquainted with, and whose condition may seem sad and deplorable, (such we are to pity, pray for, and exercise our charity upon, and leave to God's mercy) but let us resolve not to defer the care of our own souls to a sick or death-bed, but to-day, even whilst it is called to-day, to depart from iniquity. Let us all

endeavour therefore, ſo to live now, as we ſhall wiſh we had done when we come to lie upon our death-bed; let us purſue thoſe things now, which we ſhall then like to think of, and reflect upon with pleaſure; and preſently forſake all ſuch things, the remembrance of which, at that time, will be bitter to us. Let us whilſt we are well and in health, entertain the ſame thoughts and apprehenſions of things, that we ſhall have when we are ſick and dying. Let us now as much deſpiſe this world, think as ill of ſin, as ſeriouſly of God and eternity, as we ſhall then do; for this is the great commendation of the righteous man, that every one deſires to die his death; that at laſt all men are of his mind and perſuaſion, and would chuſe his condition, and ſay, "Let me die the "death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be "like his."

Diſcourſe CXXII. Abp. *Sharpe.*

A SERIOUS PERSUASIVE to a HOLY LIFE.

Phil. iv. 8.

Whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.

HERE are many particulars recommended by the apoſtle, to our thoughts and practice, tho, not ſo many as the words which expreſs them, there being ſeveral uſed in this enumeration, of the ſame meaning and import; and which may be reduced to theſe following obſervations, and are ſo many inſtances of a Chriſtian's duty: namely, a conſtant adherence to the true religion; honeſty and juſtice in our dealings; a life of chaſtity and purity; and the conſtant practice of every thing virtuous and commendable. This being the true meaning of the words, I ſhall make them the heads of my preſent exhortation.

And firſt, "Whatſoever things are true, think on "theſe things." The truths St. Paul here exhorts us to remember, are no doubt the truths of the goſpel, delivered by our Saviour; theſe we ſhould think on, perſiſt in, and never be prevailed on to depart from. It is an ineſtimable bleſſing of God to this kingdom, that he not only vouchſafes us the light

light of his goſpel, but has alſo delivered it to us, with greater purity and ſincerity, and freer from the mixture of errors, than to any other people. Were we all ſenſible of the ſtate of religion in other countries, we ſhould ſoon be convinced how exceedingly happy we of this church are, above all Chriſtians in Chriſtendom. Let us therefore, firmly adhere to the truths we have been taught and do profeſs; and to that church from whom we learnt them. Tho' I think no church infallible, yet if the truths of religion are to be taken from the rules of holy ſcriptures, and the platform of the primitive churches, then the church of England, both as to doctrine and practice, is undoubtedly the pureſt this day in the world; the moſt orthodox in faith, the freeſt from idolatry, ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm, of any now extant. This I can ſay, and declare it with great ſeriouſneſs and ſincerity, that if the religion of Jeſus Chriſt, delivered in the new teſtament, is the true religion, as moſt certain it is; then I believe in my conſcience, that the communion of the church of England is a ſafe way to ſalvation, nay, the ſafeſt of any I know in the world. And therefore let me exhort you, ſtedfaſtly to hold faſt and perſevere in this communion. As here we have the things that are true, let us think of, and heartily embrace them, live and die in the profeſſion of them.

The next thing recommended to us, is univerſal honeſty, juſtice, and righteouſneſs in our converſation. "Whatſoever things are true, honeſt, and juſt; think on theſe things." The words honeſt and juſt import the ſame thing, tho' ſometimes honeſt ſignifies grave, or venerable. And indeed, if we are not ſincerely juſt and honeſt, it is in vain to expect any advantage from our profeſſing the truth. Whoever can allow himſelf in the practice of any knaviſh, diſhoneſt, indirect dealing,

dealing, however orthodox his belief and opinion may be, yet he is no true Chriſtian. Let then our intereſts be what they will, yet in all our dealings, we muſt be ſtrictly juſt and upright; uſe no tricks, practiſe no ill arts to ſerve our ends; but in all our tranſactions with men, we muſt deal with that ſimplicity, integrity, and good conſcience, as becomes thoſe who are the diſciples of him, who was the moſt innocent, ſincere and upright perſon in the world. For, no diſhoneſty can proſper long; whatever preſent turns it may ſerve, in a little time it will be bitterly repented; but righteouſneſs and juſtice will eſtabliſh a man's ways; the upright man, tho' not always the richeſt, is ever the ſafeſt.

The apoſtle having recommended to our practice whatever is true, honeſt, and juſt, he then adds, things that are pure; meaning thereby that we ſhould ſtudy to be chaſte, and temperate in our hearts and lives, avoiding all manner of lewdneſs and ſenſuality. And if it was neceſſary to put Chriſtians in mind of this, in an age of ſo much ſtrictneſs and devotion; it is abundantly more ſo in ours, when luxury, debauchery, and all manner of immorality ſo greatly prevail among us. I pray God to make us all ſenſible of the great folly and wickedneſs, the danger and dreadful conſequences of ſuch practices. And if we would preſerve a ſenſe of religion on our minds; if we have any regard for our health, eſtates, and families; any intention not to entail ſottiſhneſs and diſeaſes on our families; if we love our ſouls, and hope to ſee God; "let us abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul." Let us learn to live ſoberly, and chaſtely, to practiſe purity and temperance, to avoid whoredom and drunkenneſs. For however we may ſlight theſe things, yet we are expreſsly told, that whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. That "neither adulterers, fornicators, un-

unclean perſons, nor drunkards, ſhall ever inherit the kingdom of God, or of Chriſt."

But the apoſtle having recommended truth, honeſty, and purity, to the daily thoughts and practice of all Chriſtians, he then ſums up the whole in generals, adviſing them, not only to be careful in thoſe things, but alſo to improve in every other virtue that is praiſe-worthy, and eſteemed among men. For, ſays he, "whatſoever things are lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, any praiſe in them, think on theſe things." From hence we may learn what obligations we are under. For if the goſpel of Chriſt favours us with ſuch glorious light, ſuch invaluable promiſes, and mighty aſſiſtances, we may in reaſon ſuppoſe, that in return great things are expected from us. To believe and profeſs the goſpel, to do no wrong to any one, to be free from lewdneſs and drunkenneſs; tho' theſe are great and good things, yet Chriſtianity obliges us to much more: for we muſt alſo be kind and charitable, as well as juſt and honeſt; modeſt, meek, and humble, as well as temperate and chaſte. And not only ſo, but we muſt even avoid all appearance of evil. We muſt not only abſtain from acts of injuſtice, but from doing a hard, ill natured thing to any one; not only keep ourſelves within the known limits of temperance and chaſtity, but avoid all oppoſite vices leading thereto; and the ſame in all other inſtances. For we are to endeavour to be as free from blame in our whole converſation as we poſſibly can; and beſides, to do as much good as our circumſtances will permit; this is to be a Chriſtian indeed, and "to adorn the doctrine of God in all things." Extremely happy and great will be the reward of thoſe, who thus walk worthy of their heavenly calling. They will here enjoy the ſolid peace and aſſurance of God's favour, which far exceeds all earthly

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bleſſings; and hereafter partake of eternal glory. Having thus given an account of what things we are to make the main purſuit of our lives, it will be proper alſo to ſay ſomething of the methods and means which are neceſſary to be uſed for that purpoſe.

And the firſt thing I would exhort you to, is to uſe your endeavours to poſſeſs your minds with a hearty ſenſe of Almighty God, and the abſolute neceſſity of being ſeriouſly religious. Tho' mankind are naturally diſpoſed to believe a God and religion, yet many of us have no lively, hearty ſenſe of it; we uſe religion as we do our clothes; they are convenient and neceſſary, therefore we wear them, but as to the form and make, we follow the cuſtom of the country wherein we live. Yet as our clothes alter not our features, or the ſhape of our bodies, ſo neither doth the religion we profeſs any way affect the temper of our ſouls. In each caſe we only conſult outward conveniency, being ſtill the ſame perſons, both inwardly and outwardly; but this way of being religious can do us no great kindneſs. Our religion will never ſerve us to any extraordinary purpoſe, unleſs our hearts are affected with it, as well as our underſtandings. If therefore we love either our happineſs in this world or the next, let us be perſuaded to make it our principal care, to get a lively and vigorous ſenſe of God impreſſed on our minds; and to approve ourſelves to him, by walking as our bleſſed Saviour hath taught us; if we do this, we ſhall experience the great benefit of it, both here and hereafter. It is in vain to think of paſſing tolerably thro' this world, unleſs we have the hopes of God's favour to ſupport us under the multitude of evil accidents, to which the ſtate of human life neceſſarily expoſes us. And as to the other world, without ſuch hopes we are perfectly loſt. Nor can we entertain any

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rational hopes of God's bleſſing and favour, unleſs we make it our chief buſineſs to ſerve, pleaſe and obey him.

There are a great many excellent rules and maxims, that we uſually give our friends and children, whereby to make their fortunes. We are apt to adviſe them to get a true underſtanding of their buſineſs, and to purſue it with diligence; to keep out of ill company, to avoid drinking, gaming, and lewdneſs; to ſtudy the tempers and humours of mankind, and dextrouſly apply themſelves to thoſe they want to connverſe with; and no doubt theſe are exceeding good rules and very fit to be ſtudied and practiſed. But ſtill there is one rule, without which the others will ſignify little, to make the life of man eaſy and happy; and that is, to preſerve a lively ſenſe of God on our ſpirits, to have his fear always before our eyes, to love him above all things, to value his favour more than life, and dread his diſpleaſure as the worſt of evils. He that is poſſeſſed of this good principle, will naturally fall into the practice of them. And as to have the fear and love of God in our hearts is the moſt effectual way to obtain the divine bleſſing; ſo it is the only means to make our circumſtances happy, if they are good; or eaſy and ſupportable, if bad. If therefore we would proſper and not be miſerable, let us not be contented with a ſuperficial outſide religion, but affect our minds with a deep ſenſe of God, and our duty towards him; and endeavour to impreſs the ſame ſentiments on our children and friends. In truth, our preſent and future happineſs ſo much depend on the true belief of a God, on our love to him, and the hopes of his favour; that without it, the preſent world, and all the imaginary pleaſures and glories thereof, would to all wiſe and good men, appear not only an empty, dull, unſatisfactory place, but a diſmal, melancholy priſon. Was

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it supposed, that all things here were the effects of blind chance, or fatal necessity, and that no wisdom and goodness presides, to take care of mankind, no considerate man would desire to live in this world.

But after we have possessed our minds with a hearty sense of God; and of his providence, presence, and goodness, so as to make it the business of our lives to recommend ourselves to him; we should in the next place be careful to keep up that sense, by a constant and daily worship of him. For the sake of God and our own soul, we must not neglect our prayers. We cannot expect God to bless us, if we do not make conscience of daily paying our tribute of honour and worship. We must therefore be constant in our private devotions; as we every day receive renewed pledges of God's love and goodness in various instances, so every day our affection and gratitude should be expressed to him, by hearty prayer and thanksgiving. This is absolutely necessary, if we would preserve a hearty sense of religion on our minds. Those who have families, should consider themselves as heads and governors of a society. The first notion of a society being that of a family. Every family is a little kingdom, and every kingdom ought to be a great family. And is it natural or decent, that there should be any society on earth, not to own and worship God? And yet I fear there are great numbers of families in this kingdom, wherein God is not so much as named, unless to affront him by cursing and swearing. With just reason we complain of the great looseness, prophaneness, and irreligion of the age. I doubt much of this is owing to the masters of families; would they take more care to have their children and servants worship God, we should have it otherwise: but if we give our domesticks the opportunity of seeing our bad qualities, and

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afford them none to learn our good ones, how can we expect they ſhould have any ſenſe of religion? They know we offend God by many raſh words and ſinful actions; but they do not ſee us repenting and aſking God's pardon, by ſolemn prayers and applications to the throne of grace. Let us then be ſerious in this matter; and bring religion into our families, and there pay our common tribute of prayer and praiſe, for the mercies we daily receive. Our Saviour ſeemed to have reſpect to this duty, when he made that gracious promiſe, that "where two or three are gathered together in his name, there would he be in the midſt of them." And the very petitions of his own prayer are ſo contrived, as to make it moſt proper for more than one, and which ſeems naturally to refer to the worſhipping God in our families. But,

As we ſhould not neglect to worſhip God in our cloſets and families, ſo it equally concerns us, to frequent the public worſhip of God in his own houſe; it being one of the greateſt bleſſings and privileges we can enjoy. Let us then embrace all opportunities, not only on ſundays, but other days, of reſorting to the public aſſemblies, and there join in our ſolemn ſacrifice of prayer and thankſgiving; which offered up with an honeſt, devout mind, will find acceptance, and produce ſuch effects, as our cloſet prayers will not; there being certainly more promiſes made to public than to private prayers; not but both are good, and abſolutely neceſſary.

And as I am now conſidering the means and inſtruments of religion, I cannot omit moſt ſeriouſly to recommend to you, the ſolemn obſervation of the Lord's day: I am ſenſible, that ſome are too ſuperſtitious in this matter; and which proves rather a ſnare to mens conſciences, than of any ſervice to religion. But to be nice and ſcrupulous about

about the Lord's day ſervice, is far from my intention to recommend. The laws of God and man in a great meaſure leave this to our own diſcretion and circumſtances. However, thus much is certainly neceſſary, that every one who profeſſes Chriſtianity, ought to have a religious regard for the Lord's-day, by devoting it to ſpiritual uſes, both public and private. It has been obſerved by ſome good men, and which I believe may be true, "that a man ſhall proſper much better in both his ſpiritual and temporal affairs, all the week after, for his careful obſervance of the Lord's day." And I am further perſuaded, that thoſe have little or no ſenſe of religion, who make no conſcience of ſanctifying, or putting a difference between this and other days; for, was there no divine command to have it appropriated to religious uſes, which I believe there is, yet to do ſo, is both prudent and beneficial to mankind; ſince beſides the civil and temporal conveniencies of it, we owe the very being of Chriſtianity among us to the religious obſervance of this day. And it is worthy our obſervation, that the moſt profligate of both ſexes, who by wickedneſs come to an untimely end, do generally impute their misfortunes to their breaking, (as they expreſs it) the ſabbath day. Under this head, it will be proper to mention another duty, too much neglected, that of frequently coming to the holy ſacrament. We can have little hopes of making any great progreſs in virtue and holineſs, if we neglect this holy ordinance, which Chriſt hath appointed for conveying his grace, and enabling us to overcome our ſins, to improve in virtue and goodneſs. Many indeed are the prejudices, tho' without reaſon, againſt this duty. But whoever deſigns honeſtly, and endeavours to lead a Chriſtian life, may with as little ſcruple come every month to the communion, as every

week to church to ſay his prayers or hear a ſermon. Or whoever does not ſo live, as to be qualified to approach the ſacrament every month, week or day, if there is occaſion, I fear is not fit to come once in ſeven years. A due preparation depends not on ſetting aſide ſome days, to put ourſelves in a religious poſture; but on the plain, natural frame and temper of our ſouls, as to their conſtant inclinations to virtue and goodneſs. A man that ſeriouſly endeavours to live honeſtly and religiouſly, may come to the ſacrament at an hour's warning, and be a worthy communicant; whilſt another who lives a careleſs, ſenſual life, ſhall ſet apart a week or a month, to exerciſe acts of repentance, and prepare himſelf for the communion, and yet not be ſo worthy a receiver as the other. Though even ſuch an one may be alſo worthy, provided he is really honeſt and ſincere in what he is about, and ſo remembers his vows, as not to return again into his former ſtate of careleſſneſs and ſenſuality.

I verily believe moſt of the doubts, fears and ſcruples, that generally ariſe about receiving the ſacrament, are without any ground or good reaſon; and therefore I am of opinion, that every well diſpoſed perſon, who has no other deſign in that action, but to do his duty to God, to expreſs his belief and hopes in Jeſus Chriſt, and his thankfulneſs to God for him, may as ſafely come at any time to the Lord's table, as come to church to ſay his prayers. And if ſo, how culpable are they, who having ſo many opportunities, ſeldom or never join in this ſolemn inſtitution, which was deſigned on purpoſe to be the means of our growing in grace and virtue, in love to God and the world? If then we have any ſerious regard for our ſouls, and are truly ſenſible how much

much we want the grace of Chriſt, to lead a life pure and holy, I perſuade myſelf we ſhall not be ſtrangers at the Lord's table.

And let me recommend to you not a means or inſtrument of being good, but a principal virtue itſelf, at all times uſeful and in ſeaſon; and that is to walk in love, to ſtudy peace and unity, and live in all dutiful ſubjection to government; endeavouring to promote the public happineſs and tranquility, and not to diſturb the public peace, under any pretence, or abet thoſe that do; eſpecially, not to make a rent or ſchiſm in the church, upon a meer point of ſtate. In all ages and countries, great revolutions have frequently happened. But it was ſcarce ever known, for Chriſtians to ſeparate from the church on that account. They ſtill kept unanimouſly to their doctrine and worſhip, and no otherwiſe concerned themſelves in the turns of ſtate, how great ſoever, than peaceably to ſubmit to the power in being; and heartily to pray to God, ſo to proſper their government, and direct all their affairs, that all their ſubjects "might lead quiet and peaceable lives under them, "in all godlineſs and honeſty." And when in any revolution, a prince was advanced to the throne, that was a good man, and one who would encourage the true religion; in ſuch caſe, they not only readily ſubmitted to him, but acknowledged it as a great bleſſing of God, for to raiſe up ſuch a governor to rule over them. This was the notion, this the practice of the primitive Chriſtians, nay of the Chriſtians in all ages, in matters of this nature; and whatever ſome may think to the contrary, this is the doctrine of the church of England.

"Let me then perſuade thoſe who profeſs chriſtianity, to anſwer thoſe obligations to a holy

life, which their religion lays upon them. We call ourſelves Chriſtians, and ſhould be much offended if any denied us this title. But if we are ſo, let us make good our profeſſion by a ſuitable life and practice. We profeſs to entertain the doctrine of the goſpel, to be taught and inſtructed by the beſt maſter, to be the diſciples of the moſt perfect inſtitution in the world; to have embraced a religion, which contains the moſt exact rules for the conduct of our lives, lays down the plaineſt precepts, ſets before us the beſt patterns and examples of a holy life, and offers us the greateſt aſſiſtances and encouragements to this purpoſe. We are furniſhed with the beſt arguments to excite us to holineſs and virtue; we are awed with the greateſt fears, and animated with the beſt hopes to the practice of it. And whoever makes ſuch a profeſſion as this, obliges himſelf to live anſwerably, and not to contradict it, or act contrary to what he profeſſes. For with what face can any man continue in the practice of any known ſin, who believes the holy doctrine of the goſpel, which forbids all ſin, under the higheſt and ſevereſt penalties? Did we but regard the laws of Chriſtianity as we do the laws of the land; were we but perſuaded that fraud and oppreſſion, lying and perjury, intemperance and uncleanneſs, covetouſneſs and pride, malice and revenge, the neglect of God and religion, will bring men to hell, as certainly as treaſon and felony will bring them under the ſentence of the law; this would have a great tendency to keep us from ſin; and if the goſpel has not this effect upon us, it ſhews that we do not truly believe it.

If we profeſs ourſelves Chriſtians, it may juſtly be expected, that we ſhould evidence this by our actions, and not live as the heathens did, who walked in the luſts of the fleſh, and of uncleanneſs,

cleanneſs; who were intemperate, cruel and unmerciful. But let us who profeſs Chriſtianity, whenever we are tempted to any vile luſt, remember and conſider what title we bear; by what name we are called, whoſe diſciples we are; and then ſay, ſhall we allow ourſelves in any impiety or wickedneſs, who pretend to be endued with that grace of God, which teaches us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts? Shall we cheriſh any ſinful paſſion, who have put off the old man with all his evil deeds? If by our lives and actions we contradict that religion which we profeſs, we thereby prove ourſelves hypocrites; and that we have taken up our religion for a faſhion, or meerly out of cuſtom. So that the reaſon why we are Chriſtians, inſtead of Jews, Turks, or Heathens, is, becauſe we are born in a Chriſtian country, and that religion came firſt in our way.

A Chriſtian does not pretend to have more wit or underſtanding than a Turk or Heathen; but he profeſſeth to live better than they, to be more chaſte and temperate, more juſt and charitable, more meek and gentle, more loving and peaceable than other men. If he fails in theſe, what ſignifies all the noiſe and ſtir about the goſpel and doctrine of Chriſt? If a man profeſſes himſelf a Chriſtian, and doth not live better than others, he is a meer pretender in religion. And how great a ſcandal muſt this needs be to our bleſſed Saviour and his goſpel? The impieties and vices of profeſſed Chriſtians have cauſed many ſevere reflections upon Chriſtianity. For there is nothing can more diſparage religion, than a lewd and debauched life. This conſideration ought greatly to affect us. For a Jew or a Turk is not ſo great an enemy to Chriſtianity, as a wicked and vicious

Chriſtian. Therefore let me beſeech Chriſtians, as they tender the honour of their Saviour, and the credit of their religion, that they would conform their lives to the holy precepts of Chriſtianity. And whoever are reſolved to continue in a vicious courſe, they had better abandon their profeſſion than keep a vizard, which can only frighten others from religion. Many are apt to pity poor heathens, who never heard of Chriſt, and ſadly to condole their caſe; but as our Saviour ſaid on another occaſion, weep not for them, but let us weep for ourſelves. There is no perſon ſo miſerable as a degenerate Chriſtian; becauſe he falls into the greateſt miſery, from the greateſt advantages and opportunities of being happy. Thoſe ſins which are committed by Chriſtians under the goſpel, are of deeper dye, and attended with more heinous aggravations, than thoſe of heathens. And better had it been if we had never known the goſpel, nor never heard of Chriſt, than after embracing it not to depart from iniquity.

Let theſe arguments prevail to awaken men to a ſerious conſideration and real reformation of their lives; let them oblige all who call themſelves Chriſtians, to live up to the fundamental laws of our religion; to love God and our neighbour; to do to every man, as we would have him do to us; to mortify our luſts, ſubdue our paſſions, and ſincerely endeavour to grow in every grace and virtue, and to abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt, to the praiſe and glory of God. This indeed would become our profeſſion, would be honourable to religion, and remove one of the greateſt obſtacles to the progreſs of the goſpel. For if ever the Chriſtian religion be effectually recommended, it muſt be by the holy and unblameable lives of its profeſſors. It would then look with ſo amiable a countenance,

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as to invite many to it; and carry so much majesty and authority, as to command reverence from its greatest enemies, and make men to acknowledge, that of a truth we believe in God, and by our lives adorn the doctrine of Christ, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Diſcourſe CXXIII. Dr. *Benj. Calamy.*

The IMPORTANT CONCERN of a FUTURE STATE.

2 Tim. i. 10.

—And hath brought life and immortality to light, thro' the goſpel.

BY life and immortality is meant in ſcripture, that immortal life which our Saviour hath brought to light, or given us aſſurance of by the revelation of the goſpel. For tho' all men by the light of nature have ſome apprehenſions of a future ſtate, yet their reaſonings about it, when left to themſelves, are vain and uncertain, often very wild and extravagant. The beſt diſcourſes of the heathens, and the wiſeſt philoſophers, about another life, were weak and obſcure, doubtful and conjectural; nor even in the books of Moſes and the prophets are there contained any plain expreſs promiſes of life eternal. The knowledge men had of it was very dim and imperfect, till the ſun of righteouſneſs appeared; till God was pleaſed to ſend from that inviſible world, his own moſt dear ſon to live and converſe amongſt men, in order fully to diſcover this unknown country, and to conduct us in the only true way to this everlaſting happineſs; an happineſs too great for words to expreſs, or our faculties to comprehend. And yet ſo much of it is clearly revealed in the geſpel, as is abundantly

dantly ſufficient to raiſe our thoughts, and excite our ſincereſt endeavours to obtain it.

By this plain revelation of a future ſtate of immortality, is moſt illuſtriouſly manifeſt the tranſcendent goodneſs and indulgence of our moſt merciful creator, in that he will graciouſly reward our imperfect ſervices and mean performances, with glory ſo immenſe, "as eye hath not ſeen, nor ear "heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to "conceive" the greatneſs of it. All we can do bears no proportion to ſuch an ample recompence. Our beſt actions, ſo far from deſerving to be rewarded, ſtand in need of a pardon. All poſſible duty and obedience is certainly due to the author of our being; and ſhould God have exacted this from us, on account of his ſovereign authority over us, as his creatures, we had been indiſpenſably obliged to an abſolute ſubjection to him: but that he ſhould beſides, promiſe to reward our faithful obedience with life eternal, is a moſt wonderful inſtance of his infinite grace and goodneſs. By this revelation of immortal life is farther demonſtrated the exceeding great love of our bleſſed Saviour, who by his death and perfect obedience not only purchaſed pardon for all our paſt ſins, and redeemed us from eternal miſery; (which of itſelf was an unſpeakable mercy) but alſo merited and obtained for us an everlaſting kingdom of glory, if we truly repent and return to our duty.

The infinite value and efficacy of what our Saviour has done for us, appears in this; that by his moſt powerful mediation, he procured not only our diſcharge from puniſhment, but alſo inexpreſſibly glorious rewards for us on moſt eaſy and reaſonable terms. This is what eſpecially recommends Chriſtianity to us, in that it contains ſuch glad tidings, and offers ſuch mighty arguments to engage us to our duty, as no other religion could ever do. For

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ſince hope and fear are the great hinges of all government, the moſt prevailing paſſions of human nature, what more agreeable can be propoſed to our hope, than to be for ever happy in body and ſoul, and what more dreadful to our fear than everlaſting miſery? The utmoſt that can be ſaid to men, in order to reclaim them from ſin, and oblige them conſcientiouſly to obſerve God's laws, is, that God hath appointed a day, when he will call all men to an account for what they have done in this body; who will then reward the ſincere faithful chriſtian with immortal glory, but puniſh the diſobedient and impenitent with everlaſting vengeance. And if men will not regard ſuch powerful conſiderations, nor be concerned or ſolicitous about their eternal happineſs or miſery; what other motives are likely to prevail, ſo as to make any impreſſion on them? For what can be propoſed to the reaſons and underſtandings of men, of greater weight and moment, than what ſhall become of them in a future eternal ſtate? It ſhall be therefore my preſent buſineſs to apply my ſelf with all poſſible plainneſs and ſeriouſneſs to three ſorts of perſons. To ſuch as ſeem to doubt of this fundamental doctrine of a future ſtate. To thoſe who profeſs to believe it but not heartily. And to ſuch as do really and conſtantly believe it.

As to the ſceptical diſputers againſt religion, let us for once ſuppoſe, what they can never prove, that it is doubtful whether there will be another life after this; that all thoſe notions of a judgment to come, a heaven, and hell, are meer fables, the inventions of crafty politicians and deſigning prieſts; and that all good and virtuous perſons have been miſerably deceived with vain hopes and fears, and given themſelves needleſs trouble about religion: now granting all this, yet if we would act prudently, and conſult our own ſafety, nothing is more evident, than that we ought to believe and live, as if all theſe doctrines of religion were moſt certain

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tainly true; becauſe every wiſe man would run as little hazard as poſſible, in a concern of ſo much conſequence, and where a miſtake muſt be fatal. Let ſuch therefore conſider, how little detrimental it will be to him, who believes and acts according to theſe principles, ſhould they all at laſt prove falſe: and what extreme deſperate hazard he runs, who doth not believe nor live according to them, ſhould they happen to prove true.

He who believes and acts agreeably to theſe principles, ſhould they prove falſe at laſt, only loſes ſome preſent gratifications and enjoyments, which he denies himſelf. He indeed croſſes the irregular inclinations of his nature, and avoids thoſe exceſſes which are really hurtful to him; he lives up to the dignity of his nature, is poſſeſſed with cares and fears about another world, which the atheiſt is not wholly free from; and ſtrictly ties himſelf up to ſeveral rules and duties, and perhaps is expoſed to ſome hardſhips, reproaches, and ſufferings for the ſake of religion; which is the worſt of his caſe. But then he is at preſent bleſſed with a contented life, with peace of conſcience, and the joyful expectation of an eternal reward hereafter; and if in the right, he is made forever. Or ſhould he be miſtaken, his condition will however be no worſe than other mortals. All the trouble and pains he was at about religion will indeed be loſt; but if his ſoul does not ſurvive his body, he will never be ſenſible of it, nor can the diſappointment be troubleſome to him, when he goes where all things are forgotten. So that a virtuous religious man, may, for the generality, paſs his days here more eaſily and comfortably than any wicked perſon, and pleaſe himſelf with the hopes or dreams of future glories; and which if no other than mere fancy, will yet ſufficiently recompenſe any ſelf-denial it puts him upon. In ſhort, if theſe things at laſt prove true,

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then he will be inexpressibly blessed, and happy; or, should they be only false and vain hopes, and that there is no other life after this, yet it will be as well with him as with the atheist, in this supposed state of eternal silence and insensibility. All the hazard he runs, is to lose some forbidden p'easures, which in most cases is best for them to be without, even as to this life. If the doctrine of a future state is false, yet he who lives religiously is safe; but if true, he is infinitely happy.

But let us now consider the extreme and desperate hazard which that man runs, who does not believe and act according to these principles, should they at last prove true; for then he ventures the loss of whatever is good and desirable, and of being forever miserable. Perhaps, nothing would sooner convince such men of their stupid folly, than sometimes to ask themselves, when calm and sober, a few such questions as these. What tho' I have endeavoured to persuade myself, that religion is no more than a melancholy dream, a political cheat, a common error; yet, should it be true at last, how dismal, and of what dreadful consequence will such a mistake be? what amazing, surprizing thoughts, fears, and despair, will attend me, if, when my friends have closed my eyes, I should find myself immediately conveyed into the company of those spirits, which I had before derided, and into the presence of that God, whose existence I had impudently denied? What horror and confusion must it create, when my infidelity shall be confuted by such a woeful experiment, and I find myself suddenly carried to that endless state, which I would not here believe any thing of? Were the arguments on both sides equal, yet the hazards run are not so; since the one is the chance of being for ever happy, the other of being eternally miserable. Which one consideration fully justifies the discre-

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tion of a religious man, in renouncing and deſpiſing the glories and pleaſures of this world, even tho' it was uncertain whether there is another life after this. But of what great madneſs muſt they be guilty, who reject this doctrine of another life, againſt many fair probabilities, good reaſons, nay, certain demonſtrations of its truth; When there is as great evidence in favour of it, as the nature of the thing will admit. When God hath moſt plainly revealed it from heaven; when this revelation is confirmed by all the ſigns and teſtimonies that we can reaſonably expect and require; and when he hath implanted in the ſouls of men, ſuch lively apprehenſions of it, as that they muſt ſuffer violence to their own minds, before they can force themſelves to diſbelieve it. For I verily think, was the moſt deſperate ſinner to labour and ſtruggle ever ſo much, to ſubdue and extirpate this natural perſuaſion of another life, that yet after all his pains, he would not be able totally to remove the thoughts and fears of it.

I proceed now to reaſon with thoſe, who tho' they profeſs to believe an immortal life, yet do it not really and heartily; and this I fear is the caſe of moſt Chriſtians. But let me aſk ſuch theſe following queſtions: What is the reaſon that the promiſe of eternal life, ſo immenſe in itſelf, ſhould ſo little influence men, and make their endeavours ſo faint and languid after it? Are any temporal things ſo valuable as the glories of heaven, or any evils here ſo dreadful as the miſeries of hell? This none can pretend; becauſe the good or evil of this life is of ſhort continuance, but that of the next is durable and eternal. Or, why are Chriſtians ſo cold and indifferent about the momentous concerns of another life, as if it was of no importance to them? This can be no otherwiſe accounted for, but that

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men do not heartily believe what they profeſs, or not duly conſider it.

Moſt men, whatever they profeſs or pretend, or however they may deny it, are not ſincerely perſuaded of the certainty of a future ſtate; their underſtandings not being rationally convinced of this truth, the belief of it is not firmly rooted in their minds. Indeed, was God to gratify the expectation of ſome men, and indulge us with the ſight of theſe future glories and miſeries which are revealed in the goſpel, this might perhaps prevail to convince and reform mankind. Would he give us a view, (tho' but ſhort and tranſient) of that bleſſed place where he ever lives, to behold for a few moments the perfect happineſs of thoſe bleſſed ſouls who are admitted into his beatific preſence; or would he open the gates of hell, and permit us to look into that diſmal receptacle of wicked ſpirits, to be eye and ear witneſſes of their ſad torments, deſpair and miſery; ſuch a ſight perhaps might poſſibly reform and make us to be what God requires. But God's ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts. He governs us in a method ſuitable to our rational natures, and gives us ſuch aſſurances of another life, as are abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfy and convince men; but yet ſo, as that it may be reſiſted by thoſe who reſolve not to believe it. For if the rewards of religion had been preſent to our ſenſes, there could have been no trial of men, no difference between the wiſe and conſiderate, and the fooliſhly wicked. God will not force a faith on us, but requires it as a matter of choice, an inſtance of our virtue. There is no faith in believing what we ſee; ſuch believe not God, but their own eyes. But bleſſed are they who have not ſeen, and yet believe. The things unſeen which God hath revealed, ought to have the ſame effect, as if the other world was viſible to us.

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And as the principles of religion, which concern another life, are not things to be ſeen, we can only be aſſured of them by proper arguments and teſtimonies, about which we muſt uſe our reaſon to judge the force of them, before we can be really convinced by them. Nor is this difficult; it only requires ſuch ſerious attention of mind, to examine with care and diligence the evidences of a future ſtate, as men commonly uſe in other affairs, when they would find out the truth. But the generality of profeſſed Chriſtians are ſo far from being convinced of the truth of religion by rational arguments, that very few of them ever enquire into the reaſons of their belief. Their faith is ſolely owing to education, and the examples of others, or embraced without any conſideration of the grounds and reaſons of it. And then no wonder, if a faith thus received without any rational conviction, and ſo weakly founded, ſhould have but little force or power on mens minds. This is not the faith which our Saviour requires, or that God will accept from thoſe who are capable of acquiring a better. A Mahometan hath as good reaſon for believing the Alcoran, as ſuch a Chriſtian hath for the belief of Chriſtianity. One great reaſon therefore of the inefficacy of mens faith, is, that their belief of the principles of religion was never well rooted and fixed in their underſtandings.

But if we are rationally convinced of theſe truths, and yet our belief is not effectual to reform our lives, the reaſon of this muſt be, that we do not really conſider them. The underſtanding hath not ſuch an abſolute power over the will, as neceſſarily to determine it to what is beſt; for our wills may ſtubbornly refuſe the cleareſt evidence and ſtrongeſt reaſons, if what is propoſed be contrary to our fleſhly and worldly luſts. As our will is moved by the underſtanding to obey its dictates,

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ſo is it alſo moſt importunately ſolicited by our appetites and luſts to gratify their ſeveral deſires and propenſities. Hence a great conflict often ariſes between the truths of religion, which are propoſed by our underſtandings, and ſuch things as proceed from our inferior ſenſitive faculties; our luſts being checked and croſſed by the hopes and fears of another life, tempt us to deny the principles of religion, and with all their power ſtrive to oppoſe the entertainment of them in our minds. Thus it was with the Jews when our Saviour was on earth; they could not reſiſt thoſe undoubted teſtimonies which he gave, of his being the Son of God; but yet the love of this world, or fear of ſufferings, ſo far prevailed over their wills, as to prevent their becoming his diſciples. Tho' "many of the chief rulers believed on him, yet becauſe of the Phariſees they did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould be put out of the ſynagogue. For they loved the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God." It is not therefore enough that the truths of religion ſubdue our underſtanding by the evidence of reaſon, but they muſt alſo conquer our wills and affections, before they can have any laſting effect on our lives. Till our belief hath powerfully wrought on our love, hope and fear, it can have but little influence on our actions. The way to obtain this conſent of our wills and affections to any truth propoſed by our underſtandings, is often moſt ſeriouſly to conſider the immenſe greatneſs of the happineſs afforded to us; the extremity of the miſery threatned; how dreadful our condition will be, if we careleſsly neglect to provide for it; and how infinitely the glory of heaven ſurpaſſes all the pleaſures of this life. If we repreſent and fix in our minds ſuch things as theſe, it will by degrees ſo captivate our wills and affections, as to make us regard and value this future happineſs as our greateſt good, and to avoid

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eternal misery as the greatest evil that can possibly befal us. The concerns of eternity are of such infinite moment, that if we do but patiently attend to, and freely think about them; if we will not suffer our lusts to biass our judgments, or stifle these principles of religion; they will at last awaken our conscience, and prevail above all temptations. And when our faith by frequent and serious consideration on these important concerns, hath conquered our minds and wills, then will our actions naturally follow. For men will live and act agreeably to what they love, desire, hope for, or fear. So effectually hath Christianity provided for the happiness of men, that nothing can make us miserable, but either not believing, or duly considering the great arguments of religion.

I beg leave to represent the different behaviour of men, as to our Saviour's promises concerning another life, by this plain similitude: suppose a person of great power and authority should make us this offer, that if we would follow him, and entirely resign ourselves to his government, he would safely conduct us to a certain country, where we should possess whatever our hearts could wish, be made kings and princes; enjoy all manner of health, riches, and honour, and every thing that could contribute to our pleasure and satisfaction; and who would give all the security any reasonable man could require, that what was thus promised, should be faithfully performed. But that some among us, not regarding the offer, nor any reasons or arguments he can urge, either thro' prejudice to his person, or dislike to the conditions, will yet reject him as a deceiver and impostor; such as these are the atheists and infidels. Others, tho' convinced that all this may be true, not having any just reason to doubt of it; yet they are so pleased with their present circumstances, as not to ex-

change them for ſuch hope: Theſe are the fond lovers of this world. Others are willing to go to this place, but they would fain live here as long as poſſible, and when they can ſtay no longer, are glad to be conveyed to this happy country: theſe are them who defer their repentance to a death-bed. But there are a few others, who entirely relying on this perſon's promiſes, and preferring them to all preſent enjoyments, do readily forſake their own concerns, and abſolutely reſign themſelves to his direction; and if in their paſſage they meet with any dangers or difficulties, croſs winds or ſtorms; tho' this may fill them with doubts and fears, yet they reſolve to proceed and venture all: theſe, and only theſe, are the true believers. When the conſideration of another world is become our moſt prevailing intereſt, and the main principle that governs our lives, then is our faith true.

To pretend to believe this great doctrine of a future eternal ſtate, and not to govern ourſelves by this perſuaſion, is the worſt folly which a reaſonable creature can be guilty of. It was the obſervation of a great man, "that the ſtrangeſt monſter in nature was a ſpeculative atheiſt, one who denies the being of a God and a future ſtate, excepting one, and that was the practical atheiſt, who profeſſed to believe both, but lived, as if he thought there was neither." Indeed the difference between them is not great; for as the atheiſt winks at, or ruſhes blindfold upon eternal ruin, ſo the wicked believer runs madly upon it, with both his eyes open.

All that remains, is, to addreſs thoſe who ſincerely and conſtantly believe this great truth of another life, who not only aſſent to this doctrine with their underſtandings, but make this future happineſs their ultimate concern. To theſe much

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need not be ſaid; their faith alone will always teach them what to do. He who hath this eternal ſtate ever preſent to his mind, is fortified againſt all the temptations of this world, either as to the ſufferings of this life, or the being enticed by any of its alluring charms and enjoyments. When the ſoul by faith views that place where his God and Saviour lives, how mean and contemptible, vile and ſordid, will all things here below appear? Faith looks beyond this preſent ſcene of life; it beholds this world diſſolved, all the glory and pomp of it vaniſhing; and this curtain being drawn, there appears a new world to his view, wherein are joys, pleaſures, and honours, ſubſtantial and eternal; the proſpect of which leſſens his eſteem for all things temporal. This faith will inſpire and animate us with ſuch courage and reſolution, as to make us deſpiſe all difficulties and dangers, and to think eternal happineſs to be a ſufficient amends, for any pains or trouble to procure it. This conque s the love of life itſelf, which, tho' moſt deeply implanted in our natures, yet thoſe who have been endued with this faith, have not counted their lives dear to them, ſo that they might finiſh their courſe with joy. The exploits and atchievements of faith, may be ſeen at large in the 11th chapter to the Hebrews, for the encouragement of all true believers. But yet far greater and more ſtupendous are the triumphs of faith, recorded of the holy lives and patient deaths of the bleſſed apoſtles, primitive martyrs and confeſſors, who with inviſible conſtancy endured pains and torments, being only aſſiſted by the grace of God, and a lively faith in his ſon Jeſus. They rejoiced and ſang praiſes in the midſt of ſcorching flames, they took joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, and gave God thanks, that they were counted worthy to ſuffer for his name; and doubtleſs God's grace with the like faith would produce in us the ſame

effects, and enable us to do, or ſuffer any thing with the ſame joy and reſolution. Such a faith will fill the ſoul with conſtant peace and ſatisfaction; ſo that a good man may delight himſelf with unſeen pleaſures, which the worldly man knows not any thing of: this makes him content with whatever is here allotted him, and to be very little concerned about the affairs of this life. He chiefly converſes with inviſible objects, and therein finds that ſolid and laſting comfort, which all things temporal can neither give nor take away. This faith chears his ſpirits under all calamities and afflictions; and when wearied, or not pleaſed, with the impertinences of this life, he can entertain his mind with thoſe raviſhing joys that will never cloy nor ſatiate. This faith will arm a good man againſt the fear of death, and ſtrip that king of terrors of all that is dreadful; who conſiders it only as God's meſſenger to knock off his fetters, to free him from an earthly priſon, and to conduct him to a place of eternal bliſs and happineſs. All this and much more will a ſincere and hearty faith effect; it will afford us a foretaſte of this immortal happy ſtate, give us in part an entrance into heaven, and at laſt the compleat enjoyment of it.

Let it then plainly appear by our words and actions, what our faith and hope is; and that we walk by faith, not by ſight, or ſenſe. Senſe is a mean low principle, confined to this world, and can extend no farther, than to things preſent and viſible. But the juſt live by faith; they govern their actions not by what they ſee, but by what they believe and hope for, looking beyond this life for ſuch things as are eternal. Let us not be aſhamed of this our deſign before men, but whatever they think of us, let us reſolve to be for ever happy, and to uſe this world as if we were ſhortly to leave it; ſo to improve our time, as to remember it will

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soon be swallowed up in eternity. And blessed be God, who hath set before us such mighty hopes, given us such glorious promises, made such a plain and clear revelation of this eternal life by Jesus Christ, and by him taught us the true way of obtaining it; who, having suffered for our sins in our nature, entered into the highest heavens, to prepare mansions of glory for all his faithful followers.

Diſcourſe CXXIV. Dean *Stanhope.*

Of PREPARATION for DEATH and JUDGMENT.

Mat. xxiv. 44.

Therefore be ye alſo ready; for in ſuch an hour as ye think not the ſon of man cometh.

IN theſe words our Saviour repreſents to us, a thing of the higheſt and moſt general importance, the laſt great revolution, that terrible day of the Lord, which the perſons to whom he ſpake, and all Chriſtians after them, were obliged daily and hourly to expect, and diligently prepare for: he therefore expreſſes himſelf in ſuch terms as might awaken their ſouls and quicken their care, by declaring it not only certain, but nigh at hand to every one of them. Several remarkable diſpenſations of an avenging providence, had been exhibited to the preceding ages of the world, which were intimations abundantly ſufficient, that God would not fail to execute judgment upon ſinners. Theſe ought to have made men wary, and prevailed on them to live as becomes thoſe, who know they muſt render an account of all their actions. But notwithſtanding ſo many repeated inſtances of a ſevere reckoning, our Lord foreſaw that there would be vaſt numbers unmoved and unprepared, inſomuch that the ſon of man's coming ſhould not more reſemble

ſemble the flood which drowned the world, in the horror and univerſal extent of the judgment, than it would in the ſurpize and indiſpoſition of men to meet him; juſt ſuch another ſweeping deluge ſhall this prove, as ſwift, as fatal, as aſtoniſhing to all, who are not ready for the ſudden and amazing appearance. "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour the Lord doth come." And becauſe we ought to be much aſhamed, that "the children of this world ſhould be ſo much wiſer than the children of light;" the example of a careful houſeholder is propounded, as a freſh incentive to our diligence. For the ſon of man's coming, as to its ſuddenneſs, and our unpreparedneſs, is compared to that of a thief in the night; and if he ought to watch to ſecure his houſe from being broke open, and the loſs of ſuch goods, which yet time and providence might again reſtore; how much more ſhould we be upon our guard, whoſe treaſure and danger are infinitely greater, and whoſe loſs if once ſuſtained, is for ever irreparable? "Therefore be ye alſo ready," for as at a time when that houſeholder is not aware, the thief ruſhes in upon him; ſo "in ſuch an hour "as you think not, the ſon of man cometh.—That I may diſcourſe on theſe words in the moſt uſeful manner, I will propoſe ſome obſervations, which will lead us to a right apprehenſion of the ſuddenneſs of the ſon of man's coming; and then lay down ſome directions how to prepare ourſelves for that ſolemn event.

And here I cannot but take notice, that the ſon of man's coming, whatever that expreſſion means, is not attempted to be proved, but only ſpoken of as an inconteſtable truth, ſufficiently known. Indeed the manner of his pompous appearance is ſufficiently deſcribed; the ſuddenneſs of it, and the improvidence of the world, are particularly foretold; many importunate exhortations to prepare

our ſouls for it, are very movingly inſiſted upon; and the end of his coming, both in this and the next chapter, is declared to be the taking an account of his ſervants, examining how each had acquitted themſelves in their reſpective truſts and capacities, and awarding to every one his deſerved portion and recompence. From all which it is exceeding evident, that the laſt general judgment is meant by it, when "all men ſhall give account for their own works, and they that have done good, ſhall go into life everlaſting, and they that have done evil, into everlaſting fire." But there are no pains taken to prove that a judgment ſhould be, becauſe this was before an eſtabliſhed notorious principle, and none were ſo bold as to call it publickly in queſtion; or ſo ignorant, as to admit any doubt of it.

But tho' by the coming of the ſon of man, the general judgment be principally intended, yet the day of our death may alſo be very juſtly termed the coming of our Lord; this being to every man in particular what the laſt judgment will be to the whole world in general. The ſuddenneſs of its coming may be the ſame; and the ſtate of our ſouls and the danger of being unprovided muſt be the ſame; for theſe two have a near connection, and abſolute dependance upon one another. "By the day of the Lord, ſays St. Jerome, we underſtand the day of every particular man's departure out of the body. For what ſhall be done in the day of judgment to all, the ſame is fulfilled, as to each ſingle perſon, in the day of his death." With this farther agree the generality of ancient interpreters, and for the ſame reaſon. So little were theſe good men ſenſible of a middle ſtate, for the purging mens ſouls by fire, or any method of putting thoſe into a capacity for heaven, who were not ſo when they died.

And it is worthy obſervation, that tho' both theſe comings of the ſon of man, be here intended, yet that only

only of the laſt judgment is mentioned, and for good reaſon; becauſe this being the laſt ſolemn appearance of quick and dead, attended with all the terror and pomp, which we find deſcribed in ſcripture; it would naturally work mens minds up to a becoming ſenſe, and ſuitable apprehenſion of their danger. Whereas death, by the commonneſs of it, is made familiar to us, tho' in reaſon it ought to move us the more; and therefore this would have been mentioned, as we find it diſcourſed on every day, without any great concern or impreſſion. To which may be added, that was it not for the great audit before God's tribunal, there could be no reaſon given, why we ſhould be any way ſolicitous to prepare for death: for what is death conſidered in itſelf, but only a diſſolution of ſoul and body; a ſtate of darkneſs and oblivion; a fate common to all creatures under the ſun; and ſo not worth the leaſt part of our care and concern, otherwiſe, than as it leads and conſigns us over directly to that general aſſize? For this reaſon we certainly lie under the ſtricteſt engagements to work, while this ſhort day of life continues; becauſe our ſun draws toward ſetting, and the night comes on a-pace, wherein no man can work, and there is no device nor knowledge, no repentance, no reformation, no improvement of ourſelves in the grave, whither we are all going. From theſe conſiderations, the ſubſtance of my text, ſeems to be this: "That it is the duty of every Chriſtian, as he values the ſafety of his ſoul, to bear conſtantly in mind, and make good proviſion againſt the ſecond coming of our Lord; whether that be the laſt great judgment, or which will be the ſame to him, the time of his own death; ſince this is but a preface to that judgment, and only detains him bound in fetters of ſleep and earth, till the almighty judge ſhall unlock our cloſe dark priſon, and ſummon us all to our trial."

trial. For the coming of the ſon of man in both theſe ſenſes is ſure, and therefore it concerns every one to be ready; eſpecially, if we conſider the hazard, or probability of his coming in ſuch an hour as we think not. This brings me to conſider the ſuddenneſs of the ſon of man's coming.

An accident is reputed ſudden, either with regard to the time when, or to the perſons to whom it happens; either when it comes immediately without any notice beforehand, or when it overtakes men unawares, at a ſeaſon they leaſt think of. As to the former of theſe, the ſon of man's coming cannot be ſudden; for if by his coming we mean the general judgment, who can pretend that this is brought upon the world, without ſufficient notice? Did not the prophet Daniel proclaim aloud, "that they who ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake, ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting contempt." So that before the light of the goſpel appeared, there were abundant intimations given, that the Almighty would ariſe to judgment, and reward every man according to his work. But we have alſo the expreſs teſtimony of our bleſſed Lord and his apoſtles. That very Son, "to whom the father hath committed all judgment," tells us, "that he will come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; that he will ſit on his throne, and all nations ſhall be gathered before him." And St. Paul aſſures us, "that we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." For God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead. And St. Peter tells us, "that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."

night." If we add to theſe teſtimonies of ſcripture, the dictates, the applauſes and reproaches of conſcience; if we reflect on the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of ſuch a thing, in order to the public vindication of divine juſtice, and the perfectly clearing up the dark and myſterious methods of providence, which ſeem to diſtribute ſo unequally the good and evil things of this life; theſe will appear ſo many evident invincible proofs of a future judgment; and therefore God hath not been wanting, either to inform us that it ſhall be, or to warn and fortify us againſt it.

But if by the ſon of man's coming, be underſtood our own death, alas! where do we not meet with freſh remembrances of that, and which God hath ordained as a neceſſary introduction to the other? "For it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that, the judgment." Beſides, every thing we ſee, or hear, or know, turns our monitor; and we muſt be blind and deaf not to be ſenſible, and perfectly ſtupid not to apprehend and conſider it. Every dying year, every declining day, every drooping flower and falling leaf, are ſo many emblems of our certain mortality. Nay, the continual change of our own bodies, makes the unwelcome application for us. Since in deſpight of all the vain flatteries, and perverſe reaſoning of fleſh and blood to the contrary; the unſteady condition of human nature, is a moſt ſenſible, and ever preſent argument, that as man comes up like a flower, ſo he muſt ſome way or other be cut down like it too. If he eſcapes the rude aſſaults of ſad untimely accidents; if ſickneſs doth not blaſt him in the bud; yet the flower decays, age will wither his beauty, and make his ſtrength ſtoop down to his native earth again. "Thus man dieth and waſteth away, he lieth down, and riſeth not, till the heavens be no more."

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The ſame common nature is imparted to all men, and all are liable to the dangers and infirmities. Neither youth nor vigour, neither piety, nor power, is a ſufficient defence againſt this fatal blow. If any human excellence could get above it; if the moſt zealous prayers, and united wiſhes of good people could ſuſpend it; we ſhould not have ſo many afflicting inſtances, that not any, not even the greateſt, not even the beſt, can have any pretence to think themſelves exempted from a deſtiny, which is inflicted without diſtinction, upon perſons of all ages, of all degrees and conditions. For the laſt groans and agonies of departing ſouls, the ſad ſolemnities of funerals, the dejected looks, and melancholy mourning of ſurviving friends; and the ſtill more melting ſighs and tears of poor widows and fatherleſs children, deprived of their beſt comfort and ſupport; theſe are objects in every time, and every place, that conſtantly preſent themſelves to our view. How then ſhall we call that coming of our Lord ſudden, for want of ſufficient notice; which we are ſo many ways continually reminded of, that without offering the greateſt violence to our reaſon and our ſenſes, it is impoſſible for us not daily to apprehend and expect?

But an accident is ſometimes ſudden, as well in regard of the perſons, as of the times when it happens. This is an obſervation that never met with ſo many experimental proofs in any one inſtance, as in the caſe before us. For it would really amaze us, to reflect how the generality of the world behave on this occaſion; and how little they provide for their Lord's coming, in either of the beforementioned reſpects. They commonly profeſs to believe a future judgment, with the higheſt degree of aſſurance that is poſſible. They frequently meditate upon the certainty of death, and the ſhortneſs of the time permitted us here upon earth. They

They pretend to be ſenſible, that on this fleeting moment depends an eternity of bliſs or woe: that their immortal ſouls, and all that is valuable, lie at ſtake; and that they muſt be dealt with hereafter, as this little ſpan of life is now improved. And yet as if they had made a covenant with death, and were in league with hell, their converſations demonſtrate a quite contrary perſuaſion; their affections and deſires fix and determine here below. And by a ſtrange ſort of unthinking perverſeneſs, the periſhing trifles of this world wholly poſſeſs them; while the main end and buſineſs of their creation, the concerns of a future and better ſtate, which are only worth our conſideration, are ſcarce allowed any place in our thoughts and memories.—Having already obſerved the dangerous folly of this wretched negligence, I will proceed to lay down ſome directions, how we may eſcape the condemnation of ſuch careleſs men; and what courſe we muſt take, to be ready to meet our Lord at his coming. But I ſhall inſiſt only on ſuch rules as are moſt neceſſary.

And there are ſome vices which muſt be declined, and ſome po tive duties which are to be obſerved. The vices to be avoided, are ſenſuality and love of the world. Againſt theſe our Lord gives this caution: "Take heed to yourſelves leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this life, and ſo that day come upon you unawares." The natural and unavoidable conſequence of theſe vices is, that they are a very great hindrance to a Chriſtian preparation for death and judgment. Senſuality, here expreſſed by ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, means, not only thoſe two ſins, but all the ſad effects of gluttony and intemperance, and the many vile luſts which follow from thence. For the indulging an habitual practice of theſe vices, diſcompoſes the inward as well as diſtempers and deſtroys the outward man.

Hence

Hence men's love of God, and eſteem for goodneſs, grow faint and cold; their inclinations and deſires are perfectly changed and corrupted; they loſe all reliſh of true ſatisfaction, and can no longer taſte any thing that is rational, heavenly and pure. Thus while they are ſatiated with carnal delights, they become liſtleſs, heavy and unactive; degenerate into ſenſe and fleſh, unbecoming men and Chriſtians; and at laſt utterly ſink into ſpiritual ſtupidity and ſloth. All this proceeds from the intimate union between ſoul and body, and the oppoſition there is between theſe two in concerns of religion. A religious ſobriety keeps men awake and active; admits of thoughts ſo neceſſary as death and judgment, knowing that thereon depends the bliſs for which immortal ſpirits were deſigned. A ſenſual man has only his intervals of thought, and even then there is ſuch a biaſs upon his judgment, that it is exceedingly difficult to raiſe him to any tolerable eſtimate of heaven and intellectual joys. But mortification and temperance leave us free and unprejudiced, and give our reaſon room to exert itſelf: They inſpire a generous diſdain of all earthly enjoyments, and diſpoſe us to thirſt after a future and better ſtate.

Another thing our Saviour adviſes his diſciples againſt, is the love of the world. "Take heed that ye be not overcharged with the cares of this life;" not that we ſhould ſo entirely mind the next life, as to make no proviſion for a convenient ſubſiſtence in this; but he blames ſuch degrees of anxiety, as imply a diſtruſt of providence, which ill ſuits a Chriſtian's faith. He condemns that criminal exceſs of care which diſorders men in their duty, and takes off their minds from their own mortality, and a regard for another world. The ſervice of God and mammon are inconſiſtent things; it being impoſſible that we ſhould at one and the

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ſame time, be extremely ſolicitous for this world's goods; and yet "to ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs," with any becoming degree of zeal and affection. These temporal cares and concerns are the moſt dangerous ſnares that can attend a man. For if he be poor and ſtruggling hard for a competency, then they perplex and diſtract him; they fill him with innumerable deſpondencies, and expoſe him to all the baſe arts of unjuſt gain. If he be rich, and a deſire of encreaſing wealth occaſions it, nothing can be more directly oppoſite to the duty of preparation, mentioned in the text. For abundance of ſucceſs commonly inflames thoſe deſires, and render the mind more ſordid and abject; they faſten the ſoul down to the vanities of this world, and will not ſuffer it to ſoar up to another; and above all, they render the thoughts of death, and of leaving theſe beloved treaſures, a moſt tormenting conſideration. So that in all reſpects this immoderate ſolicitude is irreconcileable with a Chriſtian's being ready to meet his Lord. For the indigent man has no leiſure to provide for his coming, and the rich man cannot endure to think of it.—To theſe two evils before obſerved, our Lord oppoſes, as many poſitive virtues, to aſſiſt and enable us to prepare for his approach.

The one is watchfulneſs, or frequent meditations upon, and a continual regard to the moſt important day. The having our loins girt, and our light burning; and weaning our affections from all ſuch pleaſures, as may detain and divert us in our Chriſtian courſe. It alſo denotes an exemplary piety, a graceful behaviour, and extraordinary diligence in our callings; a conſcientious diſcharging the poſt we are appointed to, and anſwering all that can be expected from us in our reſpective ſtations and capacities. And becauſe our taſk is difficult, and our avocations many; our enemies ſtrong, and we of ourſelves

ourſelves but very weak; we are farther commanded to be frequent and diligent in applying for help and ſtrength to him, who alone can, and in his due time will deliver us. "Take heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all thoſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of man." Our own endeavours will do ſomething; and men might do much more than they think they can do, would they ſet about it in good earneſt. But ſtill we ought not to rely on our own ſtrength and diligence; for the very beſt of us all, is not always upon his guard, but will frequently find himſelf ſurprized, and hath therefore abundant occaſion to pray, that he may be forgiven his infirmities and inadvertencies, and enabled to ſtand faſter for the future. Eſpecially to entreat and implore, with all poſſible earneſtneſs and holy paſſion, that in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, the good Lord will deliver him; that this laſt mighty change, upon which the whole of our future fate depends, may not find us idle or unprovided, but awake and buſy, and our lamps lighted and trimmed; that when the bridegroom appears, we may have nothing to do, but to enter with him to the marriage. I now proceed to draw a few inferences from what has been ſaid.

And we have here a fair occaſion given us, of contemplating the exceeding wiſdom and juſtice of our univerſal judge. His wiſdom is eminently ſeen in giving men proper notice to prepare for it; and this vindicates his juſtice in puniſhing thoſe, who notwithſtanding will live unprepared. Tho' he will certainly come, both with reſpect to death and judgment, yet as to the preciſe time of either of theſe, that is utterly uncertain. And this is the ſtrongeſt argument for our care and circumſpection. For,

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had that critical minute been revealed to every person, this would have encouraged licentiousness and security. The corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood, would have persuaded men, that they might safely indulge the beginning of their days, and this would have given countenance to a late reformation and death-bed repentance. As the case now is, we see how apt men are to run these hazards; and we may reasonably presume, they would have been more bold in venturing their souls had it been otherwise. But as it is, there can be no just excuse for such a wicked neglect. For the circumstance of its being accidental, does not alter the reality and certainty of the thing. The promises and appointments of God are unchangeable. Where eternal truth stands engaged, the thing subsists, and shall certainly be brought to pass. Come he will; but whether in "the first, the second, the third, or the "fourth watch" we know not. And for this reason we ought to be extremely watchful, and always upon our guard. Death and judgment may overtake our infancy; or they may snatch us away in the heat and bloom of youth; or they may crush our riper and more confirmed years; so that health and vigour will justify no man's being unprovided. But if they should delay till the fourth watch, when old age and gray hairs overtake us; yet this does not prove that they might not have come sooner, or that they will not come at all. "For tho' it tarry yet wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

What has been said may serve for a just reproof to the unreasonableness and vanity of such men, as are eternally bewailing the shortness of life, and complaining that God deals hardly with mankind, in allowing them no longer a space for working out their salvation. But let no man deceive you with vain words; Almighty God is a fair and bountiful

maſter; he affords every one opportunities ſufficient for the work he is to do. The true Chriſtian way of computation is to meaſure life by the improvements made of it, rather than by any term or number of years. He that dies old in virtue, can never be ſo young as to die untimely; and he that is a ſtranger to this, tho' he ſhould equal the years of Methuſelah, yet as to right living, he is ſtill an infant. If men will triſle away their precious hours, when they are ſo often told how much depends upon them, it is their own fault. The ſhorteſt life is long enough to bring a diligent and careful man to heaven; and to the idle, the ſenſual and ſecure, the longeſt would be as much too ſhort, as the ſpace now afforded them.

Laſtly from what has been obſerved, it alſo appears, with what prudence and piety the church of England teaches all her children, to deprecate the miſery and judgment of a ſudden death: ſudden I mean, in reſpect of itſelf, without any previous ſickneſs, or other awakening ſignifications of our laſt great call. Indeed, not knowing when the Lord doth come, we ſhould expect him every hour. The moſt ſudden death will be no excuſe to them who neglect it. But yet we have great reaſon to wiſh and to pray, that ſo important a change may approach with ſomething of warning and ſolemnity. The beſt of us all, after the niceſt preparations, will find employment enough for his laſt hours; and I am apt to believe it very difficult, even for good men, in their health and vigour, to bring themſelves into ſo ſerious a frame of mind, with regard to the next world, as if they ſaw themſelves juſt upon the brink of it. A new ſcene of things and thoughts then opens; ſuch as kindles a zeal ſometimes where it was not before, and makes it burn brighter where it was. And we often ſee ſuch glad foretaſtes of bliſs, as abundantly compenſate

ſate the bodily pains, and make every good man's bed in his ſickneſs. Beſides, to be aſſiſted with the advice of our ſpiritual guides, to be ſtrengthened with the ſacrament and ſeal of our redemption, to be recommended by the interceſſions of our pious friends; theſe are mighty comforts and advantages. So that a lingering diſeaſe, which uſually paſſes for a great affliction, is in this reſpect a great bleſſing. For while death makes regular and leiſure advances, he deals with us like a fair enemy, calls aloud to the field, and bids us make ready for the combat. But to be hurried away to eternity in a moment, to have body and ſoul torn aſunder at one ſtroke, without one minute to take leave, or to ſay "Lord have mercy upon me," at the laſt gaſp! ſurely this muſt be a dreadful thing to every conſidering Chriſtian. We will then wiſh and pray earneſtly, that God will not deal ſo with us. But ſince he may uſe this, as well as any other method of calling us to himſelf; it will be our greateſt concern to take care, that the moſt ſudden death may not be ſudden in reſpect of us. But that we be always watchful and upon our guard, ready and prepared, and more eſpecially ſo, becauſe "in ſuch an hour as we think not, the Son of man cometh."

Diſcourſe CXXV. Dr. *Rogers.*

Of FUTURE REWARDS and PUNISHMENTS.

Gal. vi. 7.

Be not deceived, God is not mocked: For whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he reap.

THE mind of man, however polluted, ſeems to have a natural deſire after future as well as preſent happineſs. Upon reflection, he finds in himſelf a conſciouſneſs of his own immortality, and a concern for his allotment in that ſtate which is eternal. And as one of the firſt concluſions of natural reaſon, is, that all the happineſs or miſery of man depends on the favour or diſpleaſure of that ſupreme being who made and governs the world; ſo his conſcience is perpetually reminding him to ſecure an intereſt in God's favour, by ſuch actions as are agreeable to his will, and to prevent his diſpleaſure, by avoiding whatever is offenſive to him. Even in a ſtate of nature, where there was but an obſcure and imperfect notion of God, yet the ſerious part of mankind always endeavoured to entitle themſelves to the divine favour, by thoſe obſervances which they thought acceptable to him. But ſtill the ſtrong propenſity of our nature to evil, the prepoſſeſſions of luſt, the near and tempting ſatisfactions with which vice and immorality ſolicit our corruption, inclined men to hearken to every expedient that propoſed to reconcile their duty with

these gratifications, and secure to them the present pleasures of vice, without a forfeiture of the rewards of virtue. Indeed, while men had only a conjectural knowledge of the will of God, and the expectations of futurity, no wonder if they were persuaded to believe that man might sin, and yet live; that God was either not offended with their transgressions, or too merciful to resent them in eternal inflictions; and those times of ignorance in which they lived, afforded some excuse for them. But now when God under the gospel has plainly and expressly declared his will; when he has clearly revealed the terms of our happiness; for men any longer to delude themselves with false and unwarrantable expectations, and to presume on less performances of our duty, than what he has commanded; this is a weakness which admits of no excuse, a crime that implies no less than mocking of God. It is disputing his veracity, justice, or authority, and prescribing to him the condition of his own favour; and what no one could hardly imagine, that a rational creature, intent upon happiness, could be guilty of. And yet notwithstanding God has positively assured us, that he only who doth righteousness shall be happy, and that he who committeth and persists in sin, shall be damned; yet still we are for finding out some evasion to reconcile our lusts and vices to our expectations of happiness.

These words of the apostle are designedt o obviate one of the most dangerous delusions of this kind, namely, that either there will be no such strict and accurate review of mens actions, or that God will be at last more favourable than he has threatened, and make larger allowances than he has promised, by assuring us that the day will come, when every moment of our lives will be reviewed by God, and that none of our frivolous excuses will divert his judgment in that day; but he will impartially ex-

ecute judgment, and render to every man according to his deeds; and without any reſpect of perſons, proceed invariably by the rules he has laid down. Thoſe who have ſinned without law, ſhall periſh without law; and thoſe who have ſinned under the law, ſhall be judged by the law. According as God's law was known to them, their obedience ſhall be exacted, and their eternal immutable ſtate decreed, in proportion to their obſervance or neglect of it.—I ſhall therefore endeavour to confirm this important doctrine, that "whatſoever we "ſow, that ſhall we alſo reap." I will then prove, that this law is agreeable to God's juſtice, conſiſtent with his mercy, and is what we muſt expect he will enforce.

That God will impartially render to every man according to his works, is a concluſion, which natural reaſon may deduce from a due conſideration of the attributes and perfections of God. For if God be the governor and judge of the world, which is implied in the very notion of God, he cannot but obſerve the behaviour of his ſubjects; and if he be infinitely juſt, he muſt ſome time or other impartially diſtribute juſtice, and diſtinguiſh the good from the bad, by different allotments of rewards and puniſhments; nay, the very heathens, from the viſible inequality wherewith happineſs and miſery were diſpenſed in this life, inferred a future ſtate, in which the divine juſtice would ſet all theſe irregularities right, and put an exemplary difference between virtue and vice. Indeed, the light of natural reaſon concerning theſe truths, did only amount to fair probabilities; but could not with any aſſurance determine what God would do, till he revealed his will to mankind, and laid open the whole ſcheme of his providence in the goſpel; in which is contained the counſels and reſolutions of God. And our Saviour in all the repreſentations

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he has given us of his last coming to judge the world, has positively declared, that he will pronounce an impartial and irreversible sentence on all the actions of men. He assures us, that no particular instances of obedience, not the owning his authority, nor zeal for his honour, will be an equivalent for the omission of any part of our duty. Even those who have cast out devils in his name, and done many wonderful works, if they neglect their duty, they must expect this sentence, "I know you not, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." And this will be irreversible; for the wicked "shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.—— "We must all receive the things done in our body, according to what we have done, whether it be good, or whether it be bad.—He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

This view is the great principle and foundation of Christian obedience, and remove the certainty of this prospect, the gospel will have no sufficient motive, to recommend it to the choice and practice of men. For "if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." Tho' we may properly argue against the excesses of vice, from the temporal inconveniences attending it; yet we may be temperate even in vice, and avoid those inconveniences. We are not forbidden the excess only, but the most moderate use of an unlawful pleasure. The prospect of a future retribution, is the sole motive capable of determining the actions of a rational being, from a consciousness of immortality. This is what the wisdom of God has thought fit to apply to the hopes and fears of men, as the sanctions of his laws. The threats and promises made use of, are agreeable to his justice, consistent with his mercy; and the execution of them, is

therefore what we muſt expect from him; which brings me to prove that this proceeding of God is agreeable to divine juſtice.

As God's perfections neceſſarily imply a ſovereign dominion over his creatures, and which conſiſts in an authority to preſcribe laws, and to require an exact obedience from them; ſo it is neceſſary, that theſe divine laws ſhould be enforced with ſuch penalties and rewards, as may be ſufficient to engage the obſervance of rational creatures. Theſe, as being future and eternal, God has expreſly revealed to our hopes and fears in the goſpel; and he having obliged himſelf to the performance, his juſtice is ſtrictly obliged to execute them. Infinite wiſdom from all eternity weighed and conſidered every poſſible circumſtance of the actions of men, and therefore nothing new can poſſibly intervene, to make it juſt or neceſſary for him to change his reſolutions.——And as an impartial execution of the divine laws is agreeable to God's juſtice, ſo is it abundantly conſiſtent with his mercy.

Tho' we cannot account for the actions of God, "whoſe ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts;" yet we may be aſſured, that in every action there is an exact harmony and concurrence of all his attributes. For tho' his laws are the more immediate expreſſions of his wiſdom, juſtice and authority; yet his infinite goodneſs and mercy were equally conſulted in enacting them. And to convince ourſelves of the conſiſtency of his juſtice, with his goodneſs and mercy, let us farther reflect on the eaſineſs of thoſe performances, by which me may attain the propoſed reward, and avoid the puniſhment threatened to diſobedience. Had God propoſed terms of his favour above our abilities to perform, we might then with ſome reaſon complain, that his laws were barbarous and cruel. But how great ſoever the penalties are which

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he threatens to the breach of his laws, yet if the observing them are both easy and agreeable to nature, and generally consistent even with our present interest, no one ought to complain of any hardship in the law, or any unreasonable severity in the author. And what is there in all the ordinary duties of Christianity which exceeds the common abilities of men to perform? How few are the instances, in which it is not our temporal interest to comply with them? Has God proposed any truth to our faith, without sufficient arguments to induce our assent? or, has he enjoined the practice of any duty, which wise and good men in all ages have not recommended, even from some immediate advantages attending it? nay, the severest duties of religion have the present encouragement of a satisfied conscience, and a joyful assurance of being rewarded with a distinguished share of glory. These are supports which can with delight reconcile us to the greatest distresses of obedience; that can make the confessor triumph in bonds, and the martyr in flames.

But as a further argument of the divine compassion to our weakness, God has provided us with a ready and effectual assistance by the graces of his holy spirit, which can make us equal, nay superior to all the difficulties of obedience. So that after all our objections and complaints, we must acknowledge, "that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works;" that as his majesty, so is his mercy. He requires no more from us, than our own capacity, with the assistance of his grace, will enable us to perform; and when we fall short of the strictness of his laws, he has compassion on our infirmities, and allows us to reinstate ourselves again in his favour by repentance. And these are the terms of happiness so easy, so just and reasonable, so agreeable to the goodness

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and compaſſion of God, that no puniſhment can be too ſevere for thoſe who refuſe to comply with them. How then can we expect to eſcape, if we neglect ſo great a ſalvation, ſo eaſily to be obtained?

Since then the laws of God are enacted with ſo much juſtice, and yet tempered with ſo much mercy, we have the greateſt reaſon to expect, that he will invariably execute that ſentence which he has pronounced, "that whatſoever we ſow, that ſhall we reap.———God is not a man that he ſhould lye, or as the ſon of man that he ſhould repent. Hath he ſpoken, and ſhall he not perform it?" As God hath plainly and clearly revealed this proſpect to men, we cannot without reflecting on his truth and ſincerity, ſuppoſe he will change his decree, or contradict his expreſs declarations. Since then God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs: Let us not amuſe ourſelves with vain perſuaſions, that he will remit any of the puniſhments threatened, or act with more indulgence to ſin than he has promiſed. God hath ſet open the gate of life, and invited us to enter in. He has plainly directed us in the way that leads to it, and offers us the aſſiſtance of his ſpirit in all our difficulties; and if we miſcarry under ſo many helps and advantages, our blood muſt be upon our heads, and we muſt blame only ourſelves for our damnation.

But ſince ſome delude themſelves with vain expectations, inconſiſtent with this doctrine, thinking to ſoften the terms of ſalvation, and reconcile the juſtice of God to their vices; it may be proper to conſider ſome of their pleas and pretences in favour of ſin; and the firſt that occurs, is, that treacherous doctrine of the church of Rome, of pardons and indulgencies for the living, and maſſes for the dead; and no wonder that ſo pleaſing a ſcheme of religion ſhould be ſo eaſily and readily received.

received. A ſcheme which gratifies the luſts, the idleneſs, and ſecurity of men, and gives them confidence in their expectations of futurity; by perſuading them, that God may be rendered favourable to them, and all the terrors of his juſtice be appeaſed, without any labour or application of their own. That their ſalvation may be ſecured by the imputed ſervices, and purchaſed interceſſions of others. But has not God decreed, "that the ſoul which ſinneth, that ſhall die; and who can reverſe that unalterable decree? nor can any one do more than his duty. After we have done all, we are unprofitable ſervants, and muſt at laſt owe our own ſalvation to his mercy and compaſſion. Alas! who is that creature that can plead purity before that God, who charges his "angels with folly, and in whoſe ſight the angels are not clean? what is man then that he ſhould be clean? or, he that is born of a woman, that he ſhould be righteous?" even the righteous ſhall ſcarcely be ſaved, and they are ſaved, not by works, or a perfect unſinning obedience, but by the grace of God in Chriſt; by the mercies and forgiveneſs of the goſpel covenant. But ſuppoſing that any one can do more than God has required, or than heaven can reward, (which is impoſſible) yet how can this overplus of merit be demiſed over to another? This is indeed a gainful, and no doubt, to the ſinner, an acceptable doctrine; but then it is without the leaſt foundation in ſcripture.

Equally groundleſs is the pretended efficacy of means for the departed ſinner, no inſtance of which can be produced from ſcripture. Indeed, they refer us to ſome paſſages in the apocryphal writings, which ſeem to countenance ſuch a practice; but then theſe books have for good reaſons been rejected from the canon of ſcripture, even by the Jews, who were the beſt judges, and therefore no authority

rity from thence is concluſive. And if the truth of the hiſtory be allowed, all that can be inferred, is, that there was a corrupt practice crept into the Jewiſh church, for which they had no warrant from the law or the prophets.

Beſides theſe ſuperſtitions of the church of Rome, ſome who have reformed from them, have fell into opinions equally dangerous to religion, and inconſiſtent with the doctrine of the apoſtle. I mean ſuch as aſcribe our juſtification to a mere ſpeculative act of faith, excluſive of all regard to our works. But the true extent of the doctrine of juſtification by faith, is this; that ſince it is not poſſible for us exactly to fulfil the law of works preſcribed to us, God, out of compaſſion to our infirmities, made a new covenant with us in his ſon, by which he has promiſed to accept of repentance inſtead of innocence, and to admit of our ſincerity, tho' it be ſhort of perfection. The merits and ſatisfaction of Chriſt will atone for our failings, and faith in his blood ſupply all unavoidable defects in our obedience. But tho' no one can glory in works, and claim ſalvation as due to them, becauſe no one can exactly perform his duty, without ſome imperfection; yet ſtill we are obliged to do all we are able: nor will our faith in Chriſt, or the covenant of the goſpel any farther avail us, than as it will atone for the imperfection of our ſervice, and render that great work of our repentance effectual to ſalvation.

Another error like this, and equally inconſiſtent, is the doctrine of abſolute irreſpective predeſtination; which ſuppoſes, that God by a partial decree, has reſolved the ſalvation of ſome particular perſons, and the deſtruction of others, let them live or act as they pleaſe: an opinion, which equally tends to diſcountenance piety, and encourage profaneneſs; becauſe, it propoſes one event to the

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righteous and the wicked, independant of our own actions; and which neither the prayers of the devout, nor the tears of the penitent can change.—But how can we poſſibly reconcile this partial doctrine, with that ſtrict juſtice God has declared he will execute in the laſt day? or, with what conſiſtency can he be ſaid to judge the world in righteouſneſs, and reward every man according to his works; who by a meer arbitrary deciſion, without any regard to their lives and actions, ſhall adjudge one to eternal happineſs, and another to eternal miſery? That the preſence of God implies an exact foreknowledge both of his own and our actions, and conſequently a foreſight, or predetermination of the final allotments of men, is certain. But we cannot conceive this to be conſiſtent with the divine juſtice, unleſs we ſuppoſe, that God from all eternity determined the final ſtate of man, becauſe from all eternity he knew how they would determine their own free and voluntary choice of good and evil; whether they would comply with, or refuſe the offers of his grace; whether they would ſerve, or diſobey God.

But none can from hence encourage himſelf to hope for mercy while he continues in ſin; becauſe, the only reaſon we can have to think that we are entitled thereto, is the conformity of our lives to the law of God. "He who doth righteouſneſs is of God, and he who committeth ſin is of the devil." We have no other mark or criterion but what will deceive us; ſo that tho' this doctrine of irreſpective predeſtination may probably endanger the ſalvation of men, while it ſuggeſts deſpair to the penitent, and preſumption to the ſinner; yet it can never be applied to the conſolation of any, or ſupply us with any other motive for our confidence towards God, than what muſt ariſe from the reflection

tion of our own good works, ſince from them only can our election be judged of.

But there is another deluſion of equal danger, and of more extenſive influence, not chargeable upon any particular ſect of Chriſtians, but which we muſt all lament as an effect of our corruption, and a melancholy inſtance of the fondneſs of our nature for ſin; namely, a perſuaſion that God is too merciful to condemn a man eternally for a tranſitory offence. An error unhappily countenanced by ſome great names, and very ſuitable to the proneneſs of man's nature, which is apt to embrace every project that promiſes reconciliation with his vice. The mercy and goodneſs of God is a ſubject that employs our thoughts and hopes with the greateſt pleaſure. It is a ſpeculation that ſooths our fears, and ſpeaks peace to our ſouls; and therefore no wonder if we indulge our reflections on the deity, as the object of our love, as the kind benevolent author and contriver of our happineſs. But then it is with the utmoſt regret and reluctance that we can change the proſpect, and turn our views to the terrors of his juſtice; to conſider him as armed with the ſeverity of a judge, and the impartial avenger of all tranſgreſſions of his laws: and yet we muſt take care, that while we magnify his mercy we do not forget his juſtice. All God's attributes are equally infinite, equally eſſential, and ought to be conceived by us, in a manner conſiſtent one with another.

It may perhaps ſeem too ſevere, that God ſhould condemn a mortal frail creature, for complying with a paſſion, in which his own happineſs is no more affected, than it is promoted by our beſt ſervices; or, that an eternal puniſhment ſhoul be inflicted for a temporal crime. But God judgeth not according to man's judgment. He who is infinite in knowledge, hath declared, death eternal to be the wages

wages of unrepented ſin; and ſince the reward promiſed to a temporal obedience is eternal happineſs, it is but juſt and equitable, that the puniſhment of our contempt ſhould bear a proportion to it. The degrees of guilt are to be eſtimated, not only from the nature of the offender, but alſo from the nature of the perſon offended. How inconceivable then muſt the guilt of offending man be, whoſe ſins are a defiance of the almighty Lord of heaven and earth, an affront to that goodneſs to whom he owes his life, breath, and all things; and who has engaged his obedience by the greateſt tenderneſs of love, the moſt endearing inſtances of bounty and compaſſion? dare we then preſume to ſay there is injuſtice in the moſt high; or that the puniſhments threatened to our ſins, are greater than they deſerve?

Let us then reflect, that we are poor dependent creatures, in the hands of an almighty creator. Let us remember, that we have forfeited all claim or right to happineſs, by breaking the conditions of it; and ſince God has denounced eternal miſery to thoſe who violate his laws, it is our duty to acquieſce in the ſentence. God has not been wanting in his tenderneſs to the ſons of men. He has preſcribed a righteous law to our obſervance, and furniſhed us with capacities to obey it; and he has given us a Saviour, the ſacrifice of whoſe blood will atone for our failings and infirmities. He offers to ſupport our weakneſs by the aſſiſtance of his ſpirit, and permits us to retrieve our miſcarriages by repentance; and that nothing might be omitted to encourage us in our duty, he has engaged our obedience by promiſes of the greateſt reward that can be propoſed to intelligent immortal beings. And can the obſtinate ſinner, who deſpiſes ſo much goodneſs, be uſed with too much ſeverity? or, is it unjuſt and unmerciful, that he who rejects ſo compaſſionate a

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propoſal of ſalvation, ſhould ſuffer the vengeance of a God, ſo ſlighted and abuſed? God conſulted infinite mercy and infinite juſtice in making his laws: every argument for compaſſion was then weighed and conſidered; and God will impartially act by the rule he has eſtabliſhed. "Whatſoever we ſow, that ſhall we alſo reap.—He that by patient continuance in well doing, waits for glory and honour, immortality and eternal life; but tribulation and anguiſh ſhall be on every ſoul of man that doth evil."

If then God will be thus ſtrictly impartial, and that every diſobedience of men will receive a rigorous allotment of puniſhment from the divine juſtice; "what manner of men ought we to be, in all holineſs and godly converſation?" with what fear and trembling ſhould we ſtrive to work out our ſalvation, and make our calling and election ſure? how ſhould it awaken and aſtoniſh the ſecurity of every ſinner, to reflect that every offence he commits will be revenged by a juſt and almighty God: That a conſtant regiſter is kept of all his miſcarriages, which in the great day of accounts will be produced; when he will receive an irreverſible ſentence from the righteous judge of heaven and earth! It may perhaps ſeem too rigorous, that the ſupreme happineſs of man ſhould depend on ſo exact a performance of God's laws. But ſalvation is the gift of God, which he may beſtow on what terms he pleaſes; nor are the conditions ſo hard, as our lazineſs would repreſent them; but are with ſo much juſtice and compaſſion ſuited to our abilities, that it is our own fault if we miſcarry. But if we will fooliſhly neglect the means, and delude ourſelves with fond preſumptions on the unrevealed mercy of God, we muſt be content to abide the conſequence. Let none therefore be deceived with thoſe weak pretences, which ſeem to widen the gate

gate of life, and ſoften the terms of ſalvation. But let us with the utmoſt vigour and reſolution, preſs forward in the old narrow paths of virtue, to which God in his word has directed us: and if ever we are tempted to hope for the divine mercy, while our works are evil; let us reject the ſuggeſtion as the artifice of an enemy, that would cheat us of our ſalvation. God has declared unto us his whole will; and let us not pretend to be wiſe above what is written, and to know more than he has revealed. He has aſſured us, that if we ſincerely endeavour to obey and ſerve him, as he requires, that there is laid up for us a crown of glory. This promiſe his veracity will infallibly make good; nor can we with any juſtice hope, he will remit the penalties, if we violate the conditions he has preſcribed; and we may be aſſured, that as our judge is not unrighteous to forget our good works, ſo neither ſhall the ungodly and ſinner eſcape the woes he has denounced againſt them. The one ſhall certainly receive the joys he has prepared for them who love and obey him; the other be unalterably fixed in that eternal ſtate of torment, which awaits the objects of his diſpleaſure.

Diſcourſe CXXVI. Dr. *Benj. Calamy.*

The CERTAINTY of our RESURRECTION PROVED.

1 Cor. xv. 35.

But ſome men will ſay, how are the dead raiſed up? and with what body do they come?

AFTER St. Paul had firmly eſtabliſhed the truth and reality of our Saviour's reſurrection from the dead; he proceeds to infer from thence the certainty of our own reſurrection. If Chriſt, ſays he, "be preached that he roſe from the dead, how ſay ſome among you, that there is no reſurrection of the dead? But if there be no reſurrection of the dead, then is not Chriſt riſen." That is, "it can no longer ſeem impoſſible or incredible, that God ſhould raiſe the dead, ſince you have ſo plain and certain an example of it, in the perſon of our Lord, who having been truly dead and buried, is now alive, and hath appeared unto many, with the viſible marks of his crucifixion, ſtill remaining on His body: and the ſame power which raiſed Jeſus from the dead, is able alſo to quicken our mortal bodies." When the apoſtle preached unto the Athenians, concerning the reſurrection of the dead, the philoſophers mocked at him, and entertained his doctrine with contempt. Indeed, it was one of the laſt things the heathens received into their belief, and is yet the greateſt objection againſt Chriſtianity. "How are the dead raiſed up, and with what bodies do they come," are queſtions that almoſt every

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one is ready to make, eſpecially thoſe who love to cavil at religion. I ſhall, therefore, from theſe words ſhew, that the reſurrection of the dead, even of the very ſame body which died and was buried, contains nothing in it impoſſible or incredible. And then obſerve what difference the ſcripture makes between a glorified body, and this mortal fleſh.

The moſt common received opinion amongſt Chriſtians, is, that at the laſt day, we ſhall riſe again with the fleſh in which we died. Moſt of the antient fathers did believe and teach, that at the general reſurrection, men would be reſtored to the very ſame bodies, which were laid in the grave; and that as our Saviour Chriſt aroſe with his former fleſh, bones, and limbs, ſo likewiſe ſhall we at the reſurrection. That the primitive Chriſtians did generally believe and expect, that they ſhould at the reſurrection riſe again with the very ſame bodies in which they lived on earth, evidently appears from the heathens malice and envy towards their dead bodies, which they would reduce to aſhes, and then ſcatter and throw them into the air and rivers, thinking thereby to defeat their hopes of a reſurrection. Such of the antient Chriſtians as defended or explained this article of the reſurrection of the dead, had generally recourſe to ſuch principles and arguments, as ſuppoſe the very ſame body, fleſh and members to be raiſed again, that the ſoul animated in this life; and in truth, this is the moſt plain and eaſy notion of a reſurrection. For nothing dies and is corrupted but the body; the ſoul goes upward and returns to God; and therefore nothing can be properly ſaid to be raiſed again, but only that very body which died and was corrupted. If at the laſt day God gives a new body to our ſouls, that cannot literally be called the reſurrection of our bodies; ſince the moſt proper and uſeful ſigni-

fication of the word, is, that the ſame fleſh which was ſeparated from the ſoul at death, ſhould be again vitally united to it.

The ſcripture in many places, aſſures us, that the very ſame fleſh ſhall be raiſed again. I will not inſiſt on the words of Job, that tho' "worms deſtroy "his body, yet in his fleſh he ſhould ſee God;" becauſe I cannot think the primary and original meaning of them, doth at all relate to the reſurrection, but a plain prophecy of his own deliverance, and an high expreſſion of his confident hope in God, that he would vindicate his innocence, and bring him out of all his troubles. But there are ſeveral other texts in the new teſtament, more applicable to the preſent occaſion. As when St. Paul tells us, "that this corruptible ſhall put on incorruption, and this mortal ſhall put on immortality; meaning the body we now live in, which ſhall one day lie down in the duſt. And the ſcripture deſcribing the places from whence the dead ſhall riſe, plainly intimates, that the ſame bodies which died, ſhall revive again. Thus we read, that they "who ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake, ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting death." The metaphor of ſleeping and awaking, by which our death and reſurrection is here expreſſed, ſeems to imply, that when we riſe again, our bodies will be as much the ſame with thoſe we lived in, as they are when we now awake from ſleep. Again, "all that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation. And the ſea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell," that is, the grave, "delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works." But if the ſame fleſh ſhall not be raiſed again, what occaſion will there be to

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ransack the graves at the last day? The sea can give up no other bodies than what it received; nor the grave deliver up any, but those that were laid therein. And was it not necessary, that we should rise with the very same bodies, the graves need not be opened, but we might rest there forever. St. Paul also tells us, that our Saviour shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" which can only be meant, that this our present body of flesh and blood, shall be restored to life again.

If we consider the several instances and examples of those, who either immediately ascended into heaven, or after death were restored again to life, they all seem to confirm this opinion, that we shall rise at the last day, with the very same flesh and blood which we had here. Enoch and Elias were translated to heaven in their terrestrial bodies. And they whom our Saviour recalled to life, or rose with him at his resurrection, appeared in the very same bodies they had before their dissolution. These being the examples and types of the general resurrection, ours therefore must resemble theirs; and we must also appear at the last day, with the same bodies we lived in here. Even our blessed Saviour, who was the first-fruits of them that slept, raised his own body, and appeared to his disciples, with the very prints of the nails in his hands and feet, and with all the other marks of his crucifixion; "behold "my hands and my feet, says he, that it is I myself; "handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and "bones as ye see me have." From whence it seems to follow, that in our resurrection, we shall be comformable to our Saviour's, and resume the very same bodies, that were laid in the sepulchre.

Lastly, the antients have urged for a proof of the resurrection of the same body, that the exact justice

and righteouſneſs of God requires it. Since God's juſtice, which conſiſts in the equal diſpenſation of rewards and puniſhments, will ſeem much obſcured, at leaſt not ſo illuſtriouſly manifeſted and diſplayed to the world, unleſs the ſame body of fleſh be raiſed again; that as the body was partner with the ſoul, in all her actions, whether good or evil, ſo it ſhould hereafter ſhare with her in rewards and puniſhments: It being but juſt, that the ſame body which ſinned ſhould be puniſhed; and that the very fleſh which pleaſed God, ſhould at the laſt day be exalted to glory, and receive a juſt recompence of reward, for whatever hardſhips and trouble it underwent here. Having thus evinced the reſurrection of the ſame body, I ſhall proceed to ſhew that there is nothing in this impoſſible or incredible.

" God can diſtinguiſh and preſerve unmixt from all other bodies each man's particular body, when diſſolved into duſt and atoms, however diſtantly diſperſed, and recollect and unite them together; becauſe God is infinite in wiſdom, power and knowledge. He can tell the number of the ſtars, and call them all by their names. He meaſures the water in the hollow of his hand, metes out the heavens with a ſpan, and comprehends the duſt of the earth in a meaſure; he numbers the hairs of our heads, and not ſo much as a ſparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge:" And is it incredible, that ſuch an infinite underſtanding ſhould diſtinctly know the ſeveral particles of duſt, into which the bodies of men are mouldered; that he ſhould obſerve the various changes they undergo, and plainly diſcern to whom they belong? Can it be thought impoſſible, that he who at firſt formed us, " in whoſe book all our members are written; from whom our ſubſtance was not hid when we were made in ſecret, and curiouſly wrought in the loweſt parts of the earth;" ſhould not again know every

every atom whereof our bodies are compoſed. If any curious artiſt knows every pin and part of a machine that he makes, ſo as when taken in pieces, he can diſtinguiſh one part from another, and readily aſſign to each its proper place, and exactly diſpoſe them into the ſame figure and order they were in before; can we ſuppoſe that the almighty architect of the world, is ignorant of and unacquainted with the ſeveral parts and materials of which this our earthly tabernacle is framed and compoſed? At the firſt creation of the world, all things lay confuſed, in a vaſt heap of rude and indigeſted chaos, till by the voice of the omnipotent they were ſeparated and framed into thoſe diſtinct bodies, whereof the beauty and excellent order of the world doth now conſiſt; and why may not the ſame power, at the conſummation of all things, out of the ruins and rubbiſh of the world, collect the ſeveral relicks of our corupted bodies, reduce them to their proper places, reſtore them to their primitive ſhapes, and frame them into the ſame individual bodies, they were parts of before?

But it may be objected, that it often happens, for the bodies of men to be devoured by beaſts, fiſhes, and other animals, which are afterwards eaten by men, and converted into the ſubſtance of their bodies; and in ſome places even for men to feed on human fleſh; whereby the ſubſtance of one man's body becomes part of another's; and then how can both riſe at the laſt day with the very ſame bodies?

To which I anſwer, that the body of man does not always continue in the ſame ſtate, or conſiſt of the ſame matter; but is perpetually ſpending and renewing itſelf, every day loſing and gaining new matter. This is undeniably certain from experience. For ſo much as our bodies grow, ſo much new matter is added to them, over and beſides the repairing

of what is continually ſpent. And after a man comes to his full growth, he uſually waſtes and carries off, by inſenſible perſpiration every day, in proportion five parts to eight, of what he eats and drinks. So that every man muſt change his body ſeveral times in a year. Indeed, the bones do not change ſo often as the fluid and fleſhy parts of the body; but they alſo change, becauſe they grow; for whatever grows, is nouriſhed and ſpends, or otherwiſe it would not want repair. If the matter of a man's body, which he had at any time of his life, be raiſed, it is as much his own, and the ſame body, as that which he had at his death, and generally much more perfect. Beſides, it is a very ſmall and inconſiderable part of what is eaten and deſcends into the ſtomach, that turns into nouriſhment; the far greater quantity going off by excretions and perſpirations. Or if it did not, to what a vaſt monſtrous bulk ſhould we grow in a few years? So that was the body of a man eaten by canibals, very little of it would paſs into the ſubſtance of their bodies. Or, was it more, there cannot be ſo much as is before gone from the ſame man's body. If a man lives thirty or forty years, his body hath undergone many new repairs in that time, and yet in the ſenſe of all mankind, it is the ſame body. Suppoſe a corpulent man to fall into a gradual conſumption, muſt this man at the reſurrection have no more of his body than he had, when at the hour of his death? Would it not be then the ſame body, if made up of the parts it had at the beginning of his conſumption? If it be, then the ſame holds as to other times of his life. And conſequently this objection of canibals devouring men, is of no force to deſtroy the poſſibility of the reſurrection.

Perhaps it may be thought by ſome, unworthy of God to concern himſelf about ſuch trifling matters, or inconſiſtent with his eaſe and happineſs,

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to mark and observe all the particles of dust, into which the several bodies of men are dissolved, so as exactly to distinguish and preserve each entire and unmixed, and at last restore them to their old bodies. But it is the greatest excellency and perfection of the divine providence to extend itself even to the least things, so that nothing is exempted from its care and influence. To imagine the government of the world is a burden to God, is to entertain very mean conceptions of him. Because we are of such weak and frail natures, as that a little business and employment soon tires us, does it therefore follow, that to direct, order and govern the several affairs of this world, must give trouble and interruption to the infinite pleasure and happiness of Almighty God?

Our dust being thus preserved and collected together by God, he can easily remake and rebuild the same bodies which were dissolved. That this is possible must be acknowledged by all who believe the history of the world's creation, as to God's forming the first man Adam out of the dust of the ground. For if the body of man turns to dust after death, it becomes what it was originally; and surely the same power that first made it of dust, may as easily remake it, when reduced into dust again. Nor is this more wonderful, than the formation of an human body in the womb; yet of this we have daily experience, tho' as great a miracle, as extraordinary an instance of divine power, as the resurrection of it can possibly be. And was it not so common a thing, it would be thought incredible, that such a beautiful fabric as is the body of man, consisting of nerves, bones, flesh, veins, blood and other parts, should be produced as we see it is. Why then is it not as easy to believe it shall hereafter be rebuilt, when crumbled into dust? Had we only heard or read of the curious formation of man, it would have been

been as natural for us to have aſked "how are men "made, and with what bodies are they born," as now to enquire concerning the reſurrection, "how "are the dead raiſed up, and with what bodies do "they come?"

When God hath raiſed again the ſame body, out of the duſt wherein it was diſſolved, he can enliven and make it the ſame living man, by uniting to it the ſame ſoul and ſpirit which did formerly inhabit there. That this is poſſible we have ſeveral undoubted examples thereof, in thoſe whom the prophets, our bleſſed Saviour, and his apoſtles raiſed from the dead. Even our Saviour himſelf, after he was dead and buried, roſe again and appeared to his diſciples and others, to whom he was known; who had clear evidence and conviction, that he was the ſame perſon they had ſeen expire on the croſs. Well therefore might St. Paul ſay, "why ſhould it be "thought a thing incredible with you, that God "ſhould raiſe the dead." To raiſe our bodies from death is not ſo great an act, as firſt to create them. If God by the word of his power, could make the heavens and the earth of no pre-exiſtent matter; why ſhould we doubt but that the ſame God by his mighty power, can alſo raiſe to life thoſe, who, tho' dead, do not ceaſe to be. For altho' we cannot anſwer all the difficulties and objections which the ſcepticks, wicked and profane, make againſt this doctrine; nor can exactly diſcover how our bodies will riſe, or the nature of them; yet this ought not to weaken our belief of this moſt important article of our Chriſtian faith. It is ſufficient, that an almighty being, to whom nothing is impoſſible, hath ſolemnly promiſed to raiſe our mortal bodies after death to life again. Let ſuch therefore as deſpiſe, oppoſe or object to this doctrine, try their ability on the common appearances of nature; let them rationally explain things that daily happen, before they diſbelieve

a reſurrection, when omnipotency ſtands engaged to perform it. Do they know how their bodies were framed, faſhioned and curiouſly wrought? Can they give a ſatisfactory account of this glorious ſtructure their bodies, and the ſeveral parts thereof; conſiſting of members, blood, heart, veins, arteries and nerves? Or how the body came to be fenced with bones and ſinews, ſkin and fleſh? When they can anſwer theſe and other difficult queſtions, concerning the formation of their own body, it will be then time enough to ſolve all the objections and difficulties about the reſurrection of it. But if to do this, they muſt have recourſe to the infinite power and wiſdom of the firſt cauſe, the ſole governor and great ſovereign of the world; why ſhould they doubt but that the ſame power can quicken and enliven that body when rotten and returned to duſt, which it firſt formed? Let us therefore not perplex ourſelves, about ſome difficulties which ariſe concerning this doctrine of the reſurrection; for it is no abſurdity to ſuppoſe an infinite power can effect ſuch things as ſeem impoſſible to our finite beings; but rather let us believe what God hath revealed concerning it. I proceed,

To conſider the difference which the ſcripture makes between a glorified body and this mortal fleſh. Our conceptions of a future ſtate are indeed very dark and imperfect; all we know of it is from the ſcriptures, which deſcribe it either by repreſenting the ſeveral evils and inconveniences we ſhall be freed from; or by comparing the glory that ſhall be revealed, with ſuch things as are here moſt admired and eſteemed. Hence it is called an "inheritance, a "kingdom, a throne, a crown, a ſceptre, a rich "treaſure, a river of pleaſures, a ſplendid robe, an "exceeding eternal weight of glory." Not that the happineſs of another world conſiſts in outward joys and pleaſures; but theſe things being here moſt coveted

coveted and deſired, are made uſe of to repreſent the tranſcendent bleſſedneſs of a future ſtate, tho' of a different nature, and infinitely ſurpaſſing the greateſt happineſs of this world. They are only little compariſons to help our weak apprehenſions; but we ſhall never know the glories of the next life, till we enjoy them. For tho' from the deſcription the ſcripture gives us of another world, we may frame a confuſed idea of it, yet we ſhall never have a compleat notion thereof, till we enter into it. However, enough is revealed concerning our future happineſs, to raiſe our thoughts and affections above the fading beauties and flattering glories of this world; to make us ſenſible how mean and unſatisfying all human pleaſures are, to excite and engage our moſt earneſt endeavours to attain it. For the ſcriptures inform us, that our bodies, at the reſurrection, will be raiſed "immortal and incorruptible, glorious and ſpiritual."

At the reſurrection our bodies will be immortal and incorruptible; for "this corruption muſt put on incorruption, and this mortal muſt put on immortality." Tho' the bodies of the damned will be raiſed immortal and incorruptible becauſe intolerable pain and miſery will be their portion forever; yet theſe words do farther ſignify to the bleſſed an exemption from all bodily evils, and whatever is penal, afflictive, or uneaſy to us. Were we at the general reſurrection to receive the ſame frail bodies again, ſubject to the miſeries we now ſuffer, no conſidering perſon would willingly take it again; he would rather it ſhould rot in the grave, than be bound faſt to all eternity to ſuch a cumberſome clod of earth: for ſuch a reſurrection is more like a condemnation to death again, than a reſurrection to life. The beſt we can ſay of this earthly houſe of clay, the tomb and ſepulchre of our ſouls, is, that it is a building which will ſoon be diſſolved and

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tumble into dust; that we shall not always be confined to this doleful prison, but in a little time be delivered from this bondage of corruption, be disengaged from this burden of flesh, and admitted "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Alas! what frail, brittle things are these bodies of ours? how soon are they disordered and discomposed? to what number of diseases, pains and infirmities are they continually liable? how doth the least distemper disturb our minds, interrupt our ease and rest, and make life a burden? If any part of our body suffers pain, what torment and anguish doth it create? or, when our bodies are well and in health, yet to what labours and perfect drudgery must we submit, to serve their necessities, to provide for their subsistance, and supply their wants; to repair their decays, to preserve and keep them in health? How are we forced every night to enter into the confines of death, if not to cease to be for a time, yet at least to slumber away many hours without any useful and rational thoughts; and this only to keep in repair those carcasses of clay, and enable them to perform the labours and business of the ensuing day? In short, so long as these frail, weak and dying bodies, subject to so many evils and inconveniences, are so closely united to our souls; we cannot possibly expect much ease, rest or happiness in this life. Our hope and comfort therefore is, that in a little time we shall be delivered from this burden of flesh; when God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, sorrow, crying, nor pain; when we shall hunger nor thirst no more; neither see nor feel the light of the sun; for the Lamb, the Son of God, shall feed us, and lead us into living fountains of water."

O when shall we arrive to those happy regions, where we shall enjoy constant and uninterrupted plea-

pleaſure both of body and mind, and be never more expoſed to any of thoſe evils and inconveniences, to which we are liable in this ſtate of pilgrimage! where we ſhall live the life of angels; and be cloth-ed with ſpiritual glorious bodies; neither ſubject to thoſe weakneſſes and decays, nor want that daily ſuſtenance and continual recruit which our preſent bodies cannot ſubſiſt without. That perfect and compleat happineſs, which all good men ſhall enjoy in the other world, conſiſts in having a mind free from all trouble, and a body exempted from all pains and diſeaſes. Thus will our mortal bodies be raiſed immortal; they will not only by the power of God be always preſerved from death, but their nature will be totally changed and altered, ſo as not to retain the ſame principles of mortality and corruption; for they cannot, ſays our Saviour, die any more. Our bodies will alſo be raiſed in glory. "Then ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their father." Our heavenly bodies will be like the glory and ſplendor of the ſun. For Chriſt "will faſhion our vile bodies like unto his glorious body; the ſplendor of which we may conceive, by the viſions of St. Peter at the tranſfiguration of our Saviour, whoſe face "did ſhine as the ſun, and his raiment was white as ſnow." Some imagine, that the excellency of our heavenly bodies will chiefly ariſe from the happineſs of our ſouls; whoſe felicity will be and appear in the brightneſs of our countenance, illuſtrating them with beauty and ſplendor.

Laſtly, at the reſurrection we ſhall riſe with ſpiritual bodies, but not of a ſpiritual ſubſtance, for that is a contradiction; it being impoſſible for it to be both a ſpiritual and bodily ſubſtance. Spiritual is here oppoſed, not to corporeal, but to natural or animal; ſignifying thereby, the ſubtilty and purity of our heavenly bodies. In this ſtate

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our spirits are forced to serve and attend on our bodies; but in the other world, our bodies shall wholly serve our spirits, minister to, and depend upon them: a natural body is fitted for this lower, sensible, earthly world; a spiritual body is suited to a spiritual invisible state, to live like saints and angels in heaven. This flesh is one of the greatest and most dangerous enemies we have; for it continually tempts and solicits us to evil; it rebels against reason, and is ungovernable; "the law in our members wars against the law in our minds, and brings us into captivity to the law of sin;" and when the "spirit is willing, the flesh is weak." We are now in a state of warfare, and must be always on our guard, continually arming and defending ourselves against the assaults of the flesh, and all its impetuous motions. How doth it hinder us in all our religious duties? How soon are our minds tired, when employed in any divine or spiritual meditations, and how easily diverted from such noble exercises? Well therefore might St. Paul so mournfully complain; "O wretched man "that I am, who shall deliver me from the body "of this death?" Why! even death will do this; that will give us a full and final deliverance. When once we arise unto life, we shall no more feel those struggles of the spirit with the flesh, which are now so troublesome and uneasy to us. Our flesh will then cease to torment and teaze our souls with evil inclinations, immoderate desires, and unreasonable passions; but being spiritualized, purified, and free from all earthly affections, it will become a fit and proper instrument of the soul in all her divine and heavenly employments; it will not be weary of singing praises unto almighty God to all eternity; it will want no respite or refreshment, meat or drink, but take an infinite delight in doing the will of God. In these things chiefly consists the difference

rence between this mortal fleſh and our bodies at the reſurrection. I ſhall now make a few inferences tending to practice.

And the beſt way to prepare ourſelves for thoſe heavenly ſpiritual bodies, which ſhall be beſtowed on us at the reſurrection, is by continually cleanſing and purifying our ſouls from all fleſhly luſts, and by degrees weaning ourſelves from all earthly and ſenſual pleaſures and delights. We muſt refine our affections, raiſe and exalt them in the contemplation of things above; we muſt take off our hearts, and leiſurely diſengage them from what is preſent and ſenſible, in order frequently to think of and converſe with things ſpiritual and inviſible; that ſo ſoul and body may here in ſome degree be acquainted with thoſe objects, or ſpiritual delights and pleaſures, which will hereafter be preſented to us. A ſoul wholly immerſed in this earthly body is no way qualified for thoſe celeſtial and glorious manſions which God hath provided for us. An earthly ſenſual mind is ſo captivated with bodily pleaſures, as to be incapable of reliſhing or enjoying ſuch as are ſpiritual, tho' infinitely greater and more to be preferred. But if we ſubdue and mortify our carnal inclinations, we ſhall thereby fit and prepare ourſelves for another ſtate. When our ſouls are thus ſpiritualized, they will ſoon grow weary of this fleſh, and long for their departure; they will be ready and glad to go hence, that they may live and abide in a body ſuitable to their rational and ſpiritual appetites.

From hence alſo we may give ſome account of the different degrees of future glory. For tho' all good men ſhall have glorious bodies, yet they ſhall not be all equal in glory. They ſhall all ſhine as ſtars, and yet "as one ſtar differs from another in glory; ſo alſo is the reſurrection of the dead." Some will have more bright and reſplendent bodies

dies than others. Thoſe who have done their Lord eminent and extraordinary ſervice, who have bravely and courageouſly ſuffered for his name; or who by the conſtant exerciſe of ſeverity and mortification, have arrived to a greater meaſure of purity and holineſs than others, ſhall ſhine as ſtars of the firſt magnitude. The pureſt and moſt ſpiritual bodies will be given to the moſt heavenly and ſpiritual ſouls. And this ſurely is no ſmall encouragement for us diligently to proceed in the ways of virtue and piety; ſince the more we wean ourſelves from ſenſible objects and things preſent, the more glorious and heavenly will our bodies be at the reſurrection.

Let theſe conſiderations then engage us patiently to bear thoſe afflictions, ſickneſſes, and bodily pains, with which we are exerciſed in this life. Let us hold out a little longer, for the time of our redemption draws near; when our tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, and we ſhall ſigh nor ſorrow no more. We are now pilgrims and ſtrangers travelling towards the heavenly Canaan, and muſt therefore expect to ſtruggle with many ſtraits and difficulties; but when we arrive to our journey's end, that will make amends for all. We ſhall then be in a quiet, ſafe harbour, out of the reach of thoſe ſtorms and dangers that here ſurround us; we ſhall then be at home in our father's houſe, no more expoſed to thoſe inconveniences we now are ſubject to. And let us not forfeit all this happineſs only for want of a little more patience and conſtancy; but let us hold out to the end, that we may receive an abundant recompence for all the trouble and uneaſineſs in this our paſſage, and be inſtated in reſt and peace, perfect and eternal. Let theſe conſiderations in particular, arm and fortify us againſt the fear of death; for death is now conquered and diſarmed, and cannot hurt

us. It indeed ſeparates us from the body for a while, but this only in order to our receiving it far more pure and glorious. Let us therefore no longer profeſs this hope of the reſurrection unto life; or elſe with more courage expect our own diſſolution, and with greater patience bear that of our friends and relations. Let us not fear to go down in the houſe of rottenneſs, to lie in the duſt; for when God deſtroys this houſe of clay, he will raiſe it again infinitely more ſplendid and glorious. Let us take care ſo to live, as that we be "worthy to obtain the other world, and the reſurrection from the dead." Let us in a moral ſenſe, "riſe from the death of ſin to the life of righteouſneſs, and then the ſecond death will have no power over us." Since therefore we have this comfortable hope of a glorious reſurrection unto life eternal; let us "purify ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit;" let us hold faſt our profeſſion, and ſtedfaſtly adhere to our duty, whatever we ſuffer here; knowing we "ſhall reap if we faint not." Let us be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as we know, that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

Diſcourſe CXXVII. Dr. *Ibbot.*

The DISSOLUTION of this WORLD by FIRE.

2 Peter. iii. 11.

Seeing then that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought ye to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs.

THE apoſtle's deſign in this chapter is to eſtabliſh the truth of that great article of our faith, "the ſecond coming of our Saviour to judge the world," and to anſwer ſome objections made againſt it. He begins by reminding men "of the predictions of the antient prophets, and of the apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour, concerning the day of judgment," which many of the diſciples imagined was preſently to follow the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. For this reaſon, they aſked our Saviour theſe two queſtions, "when ſhall theſe things be? and what ſhall be the ſign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? when ſhall theſe things be?" That is, the "deſtruction of the city and temple of Jeruſalem; and what ſhall be the ſign of thy coming at the end of the world?" With reſpect to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, our Saviour tells them, "that that generation ſhould not paſs, till all thoſe things were fulfilled; and gives them ſeveral ſigns and tokens when it would be. But as to "his coming to judgment at the end of the world;" tho' he often foretold and expreſly aſſured them of it, yet he never determined any

fixed time for it; but on the contrary informed them, that God had reſerved it as a ſecret to himſelf; but of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the ſon, but the father." However, this opinion was current among the firſt Chriſtians, and gave occaſion to thoſe ſcoffers the apoſtle ſpeaks of in this chapter, who derided their hopes and expectations of a judgment to come, ſince the time they had fixed for it was already paſt; "where, ſay they, is the promiſe of his coming, for ſince the fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?"

But the apoſtle ſhews them, that there had been already ſuch alterations in the world, as were ſufficient to juſtify the belief of thoſe we expect at our Saviour's coming to judge it; and that the delay of a future judgment is no prejudice to the truth of our Saviour's prediction concerning it, but an argument of God's patience and long-ſuffering towards ſinners, in hopes of their repentance; nor is it the leſs certain, becauſe the time is not known to us. He then proceeds to confirm their belief of this point, and directs them to make a right uſe thereof; "but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat; the earth alſo, and the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up." And then concludes with this pious reflection, "ſeeing then that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought ye to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs?" In which words are contained, the conflagration or diſſolution of this world by fire; and the influence this conſideration ought to have upon us. In order, therefore, to eſtabliſh the truth of this doctrine, of the diſſolution of this world by fire, at the laſt day, the day of judgment; I will firſt produce the authority of the

antient heathen writers; and then the expreſs teſtimony of holy ſcripture. And afterwards examine what reaſon has to ſay, for, or againſt it.

As to the authority of the heathen writers, this is one of the moſt antient traditions, there being no notion, which has more univerſally prevailed. It is what the old poets ſung of, and the antient philoſophers, of different ſects and countries, taught in their ſchools, and the wiſeſt of all nations believed, that fire and water were the two unruly elements, which ſhould deſtroy the world. And as God once ſuffered the waters to paſs their bounds and overflow the earth; ſo the day was coming, when he would give the ſame permiſſion to fire, to conſume and burn up this habitable world. From whence they had this notion is not neceſſary now to enquire; but it was the commonly received opinion, and the antient belief of the world.

And the ſacred writings do alſo afford us many teſtimonies to the ſame purpoſe. The prophet Moſes thus deſcribes it. "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and ſhall burn unto the loweſt hell, and ſhall conſume the earth with her increaſe, and ſet on fire the foundations of the mountains." And the prophet Iſaiah, "lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens ſhall vaniſh away like ſmoak, and the earth ſhall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein, ſhall die in like manner." "Behold the day cometh that ſhall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, ſhall be ſtubble, and the day that cometh ſhall burn them up, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, that it ſhould leave them neither root nor branch." And St. Paul aſſures us, "that the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the goſpel of

our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." St. Peter alſo expreſly tells us, "that the heavens and the earth which are now, are kept in ſtore, reſerved unto fire againſt the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men; and that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat; the earth alſo, and the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up." Having thus fully proved this point from the holy ſcriptures, we will now conſider what reaſon has to urge, for or againſt it.

It muſt be confeſſed that unaſſiſted reaſon could never have diſcovered this; nor can it be accounted for from natural cauſes, but muſt be finally reſolved into the will and power of God. And therefore the antient heathen writers, who deliver this doctrine in ſuch expreſs terms, muſt have derived their knowledge of it, from thoſe who had ſome other inſtance beſides reaſon, even from the people of God. But as reaſon has nothing to urge for or againſt it, ſo neither is there any thing in the nature of God, or the conſtitution of things, to make the diſſolution of the world by fire an incredible article. The ſame power that firſt formed it can diſſolve and deſtroy it again, when, and as it pleaſes. The Chriſtian writers believe this truth, and reſt ſatisfied with it, upon the infallible teſtimony of God; but the heathens, who entertained this notion, for want of an authority for it, were continually inventing new ſolutions, being ſadly perplexed about it. Indeed, we who enjoy the benefit of a divine revelation, cannot reaſonably doubt of this world's diſſolution, and an enſuing judgment, ſince we are aſſured that God has done things as great and ſurpriſing as this.

The reaſon for which the ſcoffers derided this belief in the firſt Chriſtians, is weak in itſelf, and grounded

grounded upon a falſe fact. "Where, ſay they, is the promiſe of his coming? for ſince the fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." That is, excepting that the fathers fell aſleep, and gave place to their ſons; and that one generation ſucceeds another, no alteration has happened in the world, to make us think, that there will ever be ſuch an amazing change, as the deſtruction of this world by fire. But this was falſe in fact. For when this objection was made, God had wrought ſeveral great and ſurprizing alterations in the world for the puniſhment of ſin. It was not long after God had created this world, and pronounced every thing he had made to be very good, but that he curſed it, becauſe of ſin; and from a paradiſe, a place of bliſs and happineſs, he turned it into this vale of miſery and ſorrow, this ſcene of calamities and troubles. After this, becauſe "the wickedneſs of man was great upon earth, and all fleſh had corrupted his way," God brought a flood of waters upon the world, and deſtroyed every living thing from the face of the earth, both man and beaſt; Noah only and his family excepted, and the creatures which he took with him into the ark, to keep ſeed alive upon the face of the earth. For the ſame reaſon he ſpared not the angels, but caſt them down to hell, "and delivered them into chains and darkneſs, to be reſerved unto judgment;" ſuch inſtances as theſe, eſpecially that of the deluge, the ſcoffers were willingly and wilfully ignorant of, becauſe they are ſo many arguments for a future reckoning; as they are alſo undeniable proofs of God's hatred of ſin, and that he will puniſh it. From theſe great and amazing things which God has formerly done, we may conclude, that he can do as great things hereafter. There is no objection to be made againſt the things we look for hereafter, but what might have been as ſtrongly

urged, againſt thoſe which have already happened. But,

Is the diſſolution of this world by fire ſo ſtrange and wonderful, that we cannot believe it? Why, ſo did thoſe things appear to be, which have been long before our time. They were eſteemed ſtrange, incredible, and even reaſoned againſt as impoſſible, and endeavoured to be confuted and exploded. Strange it was that God ſhould create ſuch a world as this; for we ourſelves are fearfully and wonderfully made. Strange it was to behold that deſtruction, which God brought upon the earth, not long after he had made it, by a mighty flood of waters, in which every thing periſhed that had life. It muſt be confeſſed, theſe are very great and aſtoniſhing things; ſuch as could not eaſily have been conceived or believed. Why then ſhould we doubt of the things which are yet to come, only becauſe they are new and unheard of? Strange and ſurpriſing this! For ſince ſuch great things have already been wrought, the belief of the like great revolutions yet to come, is equally eaſy and natural. Reaſon has much to ſay for it, but nothing againſt it. For why is it not reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that God will not be as wonderful in his dealings with the children of men in future ages, as in thoſe already paſt? And ſince by the word of God it appears, that the world was formerly deſtroyed by water; why may not the heavens and the earth which now are, be preſerved unto fire againſt the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men?

It would be vain to attempt a deſcription of this amazing change and revolution of the world; this great and terrible day of the Lord: To repreſent the general conſternation at that time; the horror and confuſion which will then ſeize mankind, eſpecially the wicked and impenitent: Theſe things far exceed our narrow capacities, and all that we

have

have ſeen, heard, or can conceive. We have no colours ſtrong and lively enough to draw them in; we have neither words to expreſs, ideas to form, or compariſons to make, whereby to illuſtrate and properly deſcribe them. Some faint reſemblance thereof we may indeed repreſent to our minds, by the frightful and ſhocking ſpectacle of a great city in flames. To ſee the miſery and diſtraction of the people, every one in utter confuſion and deſpair; how the wiſeſt men are amazed, and the ſtouteſt terrified. Moſt diſmal muſt it be, to behold the abomination of deſolation raging in the ſacred places. To hear the cries of the people, the roaring and cracking of the fire, the terrible falls of great fabricks and ſpacious buildings.

But how much more deadful will that day be, when not only one city, but all the cities of the world, and even the world itſelf, ſhall be burnt up. "when the heavens themſelves ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the element ſhall melt with fervent heat; when all faces will be turned into paleneſs; when the ſun will be darkened, and the moon not give her light, and the ſtars ſhall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven ſhall be ſhaken." When the whole face of nature ſhall be changed, and appear in the moſt mournful dreſs; every place uttering intolerable pains; the great deep boiling, the mountains ſmoaking, and the whole courſe of nature diſſolving; "great earthquakes in diverſe places, fearful ſights, and great ſigns from heaven. Upon the earth diſtreſs of nations, with perplexity; the ſea and the waves roaring, and mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things which are coming upon earth. And then ſhall they ſee the ſon of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Thus

Thus terrible and aſtoniſhing will this be to all the people of the earth; but much greater terror and confuſion will be to the wicked, "who will call in vain to the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them; who will in vain fly into the clefts of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and the glory of his majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the earth." No heart can think of theſe things, and not be filled with fear and wonder. We may well ſay with Balaam, alas! "who ſhall live when "God does this?" who ſhall be able to ſtand before him, or abide the day of his coming? "But the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly, and to reſerve the unjuſt unto the day of judgment to be puniſhed." And St. Paul aſſures us, that both the righteous which are dead and living, ſhall be reſcued from the common calamity. "For the Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. And the dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt: then we which are alive and remain, ſhall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord. This brings me

To conſider the effect and influence, which the thoughts of this diſſolution of all things ought to have upon us. "Seeing then that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs." If we be fully perſuaded of the truth of this great article; if we really believe, "that the heavens and the earth which are now, and are kept in ſtore, are reſerved unto fire againſt the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men; this is ſuch a weighty and ſerious concern, that the conſideration of it cannot but make ſome religious impreſſions on us. Whenever we reflect upon what we read of that

"great

" great and terrible day of the Lord," we cannot but reſolve to uſe our utmoſt endeavours to be delivered from theſe flames, and eſcape the wrath to come. And ſince this can only be done by leaving and forſaking our ſins; what manner of perſons ought we to be! how exemplary in all holy converſation and godlineſs! how fruitful in every good work! That when our Saviour appears to judge the world, " we may be found of him in peace, without ſpot and blemiſh." But the conſideration of this diſſolution ſhould be a moſt prevailing motive to all holy converſation and godlineſs; as it affords us an aſtoniſhing inſtance of the power and majeſty of the great God; alſo an undeniable proof of the meanneſs and vanity of all worldly things, and is a ſufficient warning for us to provide for another ſtate.

By this inſtance we may plainly learn, that God wants no inſtruments to ſave, or to deſtroy. As he created all things, ſo they are all at his command; and " he can make the creature his weapon, for the revenge of his enemies." If he does but ſpeak the word, the frame of nature, the elements, and the world are at once immediately diſſolved. " When he is angry, the earth trembles and quakes, the mountains ſhake, the ſprings of water are ſeen, and the foundations of the round world are diſcovered at the chiding of the Lord, at the blaſting of the breath of his diſpleaſure. There ſhall go a fire before him, and burn up his enemies on every ſide. His lightnings ſhall give ſhine unto the world, and the earth ſhall be afraid, the hills ſhall melt like wax at the preſence of God, the Lord of the whole earth." Thus is God terrible in majeſty, mighty in power, and wonderful in his works. And is not this an awakening thought, enough to ſtartle the boldeſt ſinner, and rouſe us all out of our ſpiritual ſlumber and ſecurity? How greatly does it behove us to walk

walk humbly before him, with godly reverence and fear, who is thus highly exalted! and what deſperate madneſs, what brutiſh ſtupidity is it to affront and provoke him, who can thus deſtroy us with the breath of his mouth, and ſend us down quick into hell? He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs," when none will be able to eſcape his vengeance, nor that puniſhment which will then purſue the wicked. "O conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you! for our God is a conſuming fire."

As this diſſolution of the world is an undeniable proof of the meanneſs and vanity of the world, it ſhould teach us not to love the world, or the things that are in it, but to wean our affections from them. If we did not ſet our hearts and minds ſo eagerly on theſe things, we ſhould not be ſo immoderate in our deſires and purſuits after them. And the conſideration of the end of the world, ſhould ſurely make us out of conceit with ſuch fading periſhing vanities. Indeed, the many accidents and uncertainties to which all things temporal are liable, are ſo many arguments to diſſuade us from placing our happineſs in them. The wiſe man elegantly ſtiles them, things that are not; or, which have no certain and permanent being. "Riches make themſelves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." The daily caſualties which happen ought to abate our eſteem for theſe tranſient things, and to render them ſo much the leſs valuable. And the world itſelf, which miniſters to our pleaſures and vices, to our luſt, avarice and ambition, is haſtening to a diſſolution. The time is coming when a period will be put to it; when the earth, and the works that are therein ſhall be burnt up; when the works of nature, art and induſtry ſhall be deſtroyed; when all the pride and pomp of life ſhall paſs away and vaniſh into ſmoak;

ſmoak; when all diſputes and contention, avarice and ambition ſhall ceaſe, and the objects of theſe paſſions be forever removed from our eyes; when all civil marks of difference and diſtinction ſhall be done away; when the greateſt empires and imperial cities ſhall be laid waſte and deſolate without an inhabitant; when the proudeſt trophies and monuments of glory ſhall be crumbled into duſt, and be no more remembered.

Since then this is the condition, and will be the fate of all that is in this world, why ſhould we, who are candidates for an heavenly immortality, ſet our affections on any thing leſs permanent and durable than ourſelves? Since all things here are ſo very diſproportionate to the capacities of our ſouls, and their eternal duration; why ſhould we ſet our hearts and minds on the enjoyments of them? And the thoughts of the diſſolution of this world, ſhould extinguiſh all our heats and conteſts, cure our pride and ambition, abate our love of ſenſual pleaſures, and make us perfectly indifferent as to what happens to us here. Let us "not love the world, nor the things that are in the world;—for the world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof." Let us "uſe this world, as not abuſing it, for the faſhion thereof paſſeth away." And therefore this is a ſufficient warning, for us to provide for another world. Not only we ourſelves are of a ſhort continuance here, but the world itſelf is tranſient; ſo that this ſhort and imperfect ſtate will not admit of any great and laſting deſigns. Here we are ſtraitened for want of time, and therefore we need not be much concerned about what we do. But the next life is eternal and immutable, is capable of the greateſt and nobleſt deſigns, ſuch as are worthy of a rational creature, and what deſerve our utmoſt care. For there we may be happy, not a few days or years, but infinitely, and to all eternity. And the only way to

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ſecure this happineſs, is by a life of piety and virtue; "by all holy converſation and godlineſs, by cleanſing ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, purifying our nature, and renewing ourſelves after the image of God, who created us in righteouſneſs and true holineſs." This world is made up of mixed multitudes, and the kingdoms of the earth conſiſt of good and bad; but at the laſt day, there will be a grand ſeparation made of the righteous from the wicked, and an eternal difference put between them. "Into the kingdom of heaven no unclean thing ſhall enter, and without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord."

If therefore we expect to be made partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light, we muſt prepare for it, by cleanſing ourſelves from all impurities and defilements, and walking as children of the light. And this is the inference the apoſtle draws: "Seeing then that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought ye to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs." Seeing then the world itſelf muſt undergo ſuch a change, be purged and refined by fire, and be made perfectly new, that it may be fit for the glorious kingdom of Chriſt; how much more neceſſary is this change and renovation to be made, in thoſe who are to be the ſubjects of that kingdom, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs! If this earth muſt be purified by fire, and the heavens themſelves are not clean in God's ſight, how ſhall man be able to appear before him; who is filthy and abominable, and drinks iniquity like water!" Not that this change can be wrought in us, as it will be in the heavens and the earth, by fire, by the fancied flames of purgatory, for which there is no ground, either in ſcripture or reaſon; but it muſt be produced in us by ſuch methods, as both ſcripture and reaſon direct us to, and which are proper to influence rational creatures; by ſuch ſuitable conſiderations

tions and reflections as has been before ſuggeſted; by ſetting God always before us, and reflecting on his infinite majeſty and power; by weaning our affections from this world, and fixing them on heaven; by giving diligent attendance to all the duties of religion, and being conſtant in the practice of thoſe holy rules which the goſpel preſcribes; by denying ourſelves, and ſtriving to ſubdue our corruptions, and perfect our virtues; and by praying to God for the aſſiſtance of his holy ſpirit, to enable us to bring our wills to a conformity with his. Thus may we eſcape the corruption which is in the world thro' luſt; or cleanſe ourſelves from that guilt and pollution, which we have contracted by our converſation with it. Thus will there be a new heart and right ſpirit created in us, which will remain when all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, and reſcue us from the general ruin; and thro' the merits of our Saviour, procure us admittance into heaven, where we ſhall have a treaſure that faileth not, a kingdom which cannot be ſhaken, a city which hath everlaſting foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God.

Diſcourſe CXXVIII. Bp. *Moor.*

Of the FUTURE JUDGMENT.

Acts xvii. 31.

He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs.

NO man travelled ſo far to preach the goſpel, and perſuade men to believe and conform to his holy laws, as St. Paul. When he was at Athens, obſerving that the Athenians inſcribed their altars, and directed their devotions to the unknown God, he thought he ſhould enlighten their underſtandings and inflame their devotions, by diſcovering to them the nature of that God, which they ſo little knew; wherefore he declared that this God made the world and all things therein, and he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor is worſhipped with mens hands; for he giveth to all life, breath, and all things, being compleatly perfect, and entirely ſubſiſting of himſelf. The apoſtle ſhews the abſurdity and unreaſonableneſs of idolatry, to which the pagans were greatly addicted. "For as much then, as we are "the offspring of God, we ought not to think that "the godhead is like unto gold or ſilver, or ſtone "graven by art, or man's devices." That is, if men are the workmanſhip or offspring of God, and the images which they worſhipped were made by their own hands; then ſhould they render their devotions to that God, who gave them their beings, and not to the golden, ſilver, or wooden images, which they

they carved with their own fingers. He being more senseless and stupid, than the stocks and stones, that can believe and adore that for God, which he himself made; which is to believe, that the image made man, who was its maker.

The apostle having thus proved the existence of one Almighty God, maker of heaven and earth, which is the foundation of all religion; and also exposed the folly, madness, and impiety of worshipping idols; which is to give the honour, only due to him, unto the meanest of his creatures; he then proceeds to exhort them to repentance. The doctrine of repentance he enforces from an argument taken from the justice of God, which engaged him to decree a time when he will call men to an account, and pass judgment on their behaviour here; rewarding all good actions, and punishing the evil, where persevered in without repentance. But when the philosophers heard of the resurrection of the dead, the natural inference from the doctrine of a future judgment, some mocked, others desired to hear more of this matter. It was the Epicureans most likely that mocked at a future judgment; for they whose passions and lusts so far transported them, as to affirm, that God regards not the world, nor observes the lives of men, might well be supposed to deny his judging it hereafter. And probably it was the Stoicks, who desired to hear St. Paul again, for farther information in the weighty concern of a judgment to come; no sect of philosophers having so truly stated the measures of good and evil as they have done; and whose doctrine and rules of life, come the nearest to the Christian institution. And if the Stoicks, who were in a manner strangers to all supernatural revelations, could desire instruction about the day of judgment; surely we Christians, who are baptized into that faith, where it is a principal article; and are assisted by divine

grace, ſo to frame our lives as that we may be accepted at the day of judgment, ought rightly to perceive the nature of it, and be ſo affected therewith, as that we may make it our chief buſineſs, to prepare and qualify ourſelves for the ſecond coming of Chriſt, to be our judge. "Becauſe he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead."

Theſe words imply the following particulars. The certainty of a future judgment, confirmed to us by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead. That Chriſt is to be our judge. That this judgment will be univerſal, and include all men, even the whole world. That the time of this judgment is already fixed; God having appointed a day. And that all will be judged by a law, the moſt juſt and equal. For he will judge the world in righteouſneſs. But before I ſhew the force of the apoſtle's argument for a day of judgment, taken from the reſurrection of Chriſt; I ſhall inſiſt on ſuch arguments to prove it, as may be diſcovered by natural light.

The certainty then of a future judgment to come, may be evinced from the nature of God, and the ſtate of this world. For if we believe there is a God, we muſt grant that he is a being of infinite perfections, whereof one is juſtice; and that a being infinitely juſt, will not always ſuffer injuſtice to go unpuniſhed. If we alſo reflect on the condition of things in this life, we ſhall find many unjuſt actions to eſcape puniſhment, and be attended with ſucceſs; from whence we may reaſonably conclude, that a time will aſſuredly come, when God will bring theſe wicked deeds to judgment; for the judge of all the earth will do right. As God, by creating the world with ſuch order and beauty, manifeſted his almighty power and unſearchable wiſdom; as

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he by ſo excellently preſerving, and continually providing for the neceſſities and wants of his numerous creatures, convinces us of his wiſe providence, perpetual care, and kindneſs for us; ſo by examining at the end of the world, all the actions of his rational creatures in this life, and rewarding or puniſhing their paſt behaviour, according to what it has been; he will fully evidence and diſplay his exact unerring juſtice. We now often ſee notorious wicked men to proſper and flouriſh; whilſt the truly virtuous and humble are abuſed, oppreſſed, derided and contemned: as if proſperity was the reward of wickedneſs, and adverſity the natural fruit of virtue. But ſince it is inconſiſtent with the divine juſtice, that piety ſhould always go unrewarded, and ſin unpuniſhed, we may therefore conclude, that tho' God for good reaſons ſometimes forbears ſinners, and doth not conſtantly beſtow preſent rewards on holy, good men, yet he hath aſſuredly appointed a day, which is drawing on, when he will judge the whole world in righteouſneſs. Nor ſhould any wonder, that a Being infinitely juſt does not always immediately reward virtue and puniſh ſin; ſince great advantages may accrue to good and bad men, from God's forbearance. For were good and pious actions immediately rewarded, it would make us too much in love with this world; and nothing more powerfully weans our hearts from it, than trouble, loſſes, and diſappointments. When men are afflicted and perſecuted, then, if ever, they will confeſs and beg pardon for their ſins, look up to heaven for ſuccour and relief, and place their affections on certain unperiſhable delights, of which no earthly power can deprive them. So that croſſes and ſorrows are very proper to diſengage us from the pleaſures of this life, and to make us earneſtly deſire thoſe of the next. Our bleſſed Saviour was made perfect by ſufferings. Again,

The nature of God's covenant with us requires, that good men ſhould in this life be expoſed to ſufferings, as well as receive bleſſings; this world being a ſtate of trial, as the future will be a ſtate of rewards. But were good mens virtuous deeds immediately recompenſed; as then there could be no opportunity afforded to exerciſe the Chriſtian virtues of meekneſs, patience, ſelf-denial, and readineſs to forgive injuries; ſo would there be no trial of the ſincerity of our love to God, and how much we could contentedly for his ſake loſe and ſuffer in his cauſe. And as to wicked men, they have great reaſon to be thankful for God's forbearance; who by ſparing them when they deſerve puniſhment, it gives them time to repent of their having offended a God full of mercy and compaſſion, and is a moſt prevailing argument for them to break off their ſins, by a ſpeedy return to their duty. Let none then complain of God's delaying to puniſh the wicked, for was he not merciful as well as juſt, no fleſh could live and appear before him.

Another argument for a future judgment may be taken from our own nature. God, by giving us a power over our actions, hath made us free agents. In the right uſe of this power conſiſts virtue; in the abuſe thereof, vice. So that if we will, we may do good, and avoid evil. Which liberty to do good or evil qualifies us to be governed by laws, and makes us capable of rewards or puniſhments. But ſince God does not judge us in this world, for the uſe of ſuch powers, we muſt reaſonably expect him to do it in the next. God hath alſo furniſhed us with underſtandings to diſtinguiſh between good and evil, to know what will pleaſe or offend him. Indeed, the eternal unalterable difference between good and evil, may ſo eaſily be diſcovered by natural reaſon, that even the moſt barbarous and illiterate, are not without a ſenſe of the agreeableneſs and beauty of virtue;

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the odiousness and deformity of vice. For our natures are so framed; that we cannot do good or evil, but we must approve of the one and condemn the other. A virtuous act affords us satisfaction and delight; an evil one remorse, trouble, and fear.

And this not from the dread of punishment, which human laws may inflict, but in cases where they do not reach, and as to facts that cannot be discovered. What sentiments the pagans had of virtue and vice, rewards and punishments, appear from the observation which Barbarians made when they saw the viper fastened on St. Paul's hand, who on the occasion, declared it their general opinion, that he was a murtherer; and tho' he had escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffered him not to live. Which shews that even these pagans could distinguish between good and evil; that they thought good actions deserve reward, and evil ones punishments; that however heinous sinners escape the sentence of human laws, yet divine vengeance will still pursue them; and consequently, that there are dreadful punishments, far exceeding those of human laws, from which notorious sinners cannot secure themselves, tho' they fly from the country where their crimes were committed. I might also instance in Felix, a man in great authority; whose conscience when awakened by St. Paul's excellent discourse, made him so sensible of his vile guilt and great wickedness, that he was seized with a fit of trembling. The character or quality of his person, as governor of the people, could not hinder him from betraying his fear, and discovering the terrible apprehensions he had of a judgment to come.

The insufficiency of human laws to reward virtue or punish vice, is also another evidence for a future judgment. Mighty armies and bodies of men will commit rapine and violence, maugre all laws to pu-

niſh and reſtrain them. Many ſins are ſo ſecretly acted, that no law can extend to them; which yet the juſtice of God will bring to light and judgment. A perſon may be very wicked, full of treachery, malice, uncleanneſs, and revenge, without being puniſhed by any human laws; but God ſtrictly requires the right government of our thoughts, and will as certainly puniſh thoſe that are wilful, as any ſins we act in the ſight of the world. Nor can civil laws reward all kind of virtue; ſince there can be as many ſecret inſtances of virtue as of vice. Good men do many charitable, generous acts, of which the world knows nothing; and who expect no other reward than the favour of God, and the joy which from thence naturally ariſes in their minds. And in all ages worthy men have ſuffered the greateſt evils, without hope or proſpect of any temporal recompence. "They have been tortured, not accep-"ing deliverance, that they might obtain a better "reſurrection." Thus far the neceſſity of a future judgment appears from natural reaſon.

The laſt argument I ſhall make uſe of for a judgment to come, is that of St. Paul, taken from the reſurrection of our bleſſed Saviour. For "if Chriſt "be riſen from the dead," then is our reſurrection poſſible. He is the head, and we the members of the ſame body, the church; his reſurrection therefore infers the poſſibility and neceſſity of ours. For we cannot ſuppoſe the head to be revived and raiſed from the dead, without all other parts of the body; that would be like a maſter without ſervants, a king without ſubjects. If God raiſed Chriſt from the dead, that he might judge both quick and dead; it becomes abſolutely neceſſary, that all the dead ſhould be raiſed, whom he is to judge. In truth, as a judgment to come is a fundamental article of our religion, ſo is it exceedingly agreeable to human reaſon, as before obſerved; for if God created us,

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and that all we enjoy is from him, what is more reaſonable than for him to call us to an account, and paſs judgment on us, according to the uſe we have made of what he committed to our truſt?

But ſome will ſay, that tho' a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, ſeems very ſuitable to natural reaſon, and is a fundamental part of all religion; yet little of theſe things appear in the law, which God gave to the Jews, his own people. To this may be anſwered, that the hopes they had of future rewards, were not grounded on their law, but came to them by a general tradition from the patriarchs and other good men; and which were afterwards more fully explained and confirmed to them by the holy prophets. Indeed, the notions of the next life were never ſo amply unfolded, and clearly taught the Jews, as about the time of the Babylonian captivity. When the wall of Jeruſalem was broken down, the houſe of God conſumed by fire, the veſſels of the temple deſtroyed, the public exerciſe of religion ſuppreſſed, and the people carried captive into a ſtrange land; then, that they might not forget their God, when labouring under ſuch dreadful, ſharp, and various calamities, the prophet Daniel gave a more diſtinct account than any before him, of a future judgment, and of recompences laid up for afflicted virtue. "Many of them that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake; ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to everlaſting ſhame." About this time, Iſaiah alſo propheſied, "thy dead men ſhall live, together with my dead body ſhall they ariſe: awake and ſing, ye that dwell in the duſt." Then alſo Ezekiel uttered a prophecy, "that fleſh and ſinews ſhould come on dry bones, that ſkin ſhould cover them, and that the breath of life ſhould enter into them;" from whence ſome call him the prophet of the reſurrection. After this time, the apprehenſions of ano-

ther world, and the hopes of heavenly rewards for temporal ſufferings, daily encreaſed. And tho' the Sadducees under all that light were ſo ſtupid as to deny the reſurrection, angels, and ſpirits; yet the Jewiſh nation generally believed a future life. I proceed to ſhew,

That God hath appointed his ſon Jeſus Chriſt to be our judge: tho' God by right of creation is both judge and governor of the world, yet he has tranſlated this right unto his ſon our bleſſed redeemer. "The father judgeth no man, but hath committed "all judgment to the ſon." God by this has greatly honoured his ſon, and alſo manifeſted exceeding kindneſs and good-will to men: great honour to his ſon, in that he who was deſpiſed by the world, as the ſon of a carpenter, ſlandered as a glutton and wine-bibber, traduced and reviled as a wicked impoſtor, blaſphemed as an agent for devils; and at laſt accuſed, condemned, and executed as the worſt of malefactors; ſhall return again in great glory, riding on the clouds with ten thouſand of his ſaints and angels, to execute judgment on the ſame world, that had ſo maliciouſly treated him: "and to convince all that are ungodly among them, "of all their ungodly deeds which they have com-"mitted, and of their hard ſpeeches which ſinners "have ſpoken againſt him." And God by giving his ſon this power, hath alſo manifeſted much kindneſs and good-will to us. For Chriſt being our judge in his human perſon, we ſhall be able to ſee our judge; but no fleſhly eyes can behold the majeſty of God, or bear the glories of his preſence; whom neither the righteous nor wicked ſhall ever ſee, till theſe mortal, earthly bodies are changed into immortal and heavenly ones. Then, indeed, it ſhall be our infinite happineſs and reward to ſee God as he is, and dwell in his preſence, to love and worſhip him a whole eternity. It will alſo be

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matter of great comfort, to have Christ our judge, who assumed and was liable to all the infirmities of our nature; who is sensible of the frailties, errors, and manifold temptations, which daily assault us, and will make a merciful, gracious allowance for them; who has felt our weakness and will pity it. On the other hand, nothing will more heighten the terrors of the wicked, than for Christ to judge them, who was their advocate and daily intercessor with God; but they thro' their impenitent hard hearts have defeated and rendered ineffectual his powerful meditations at God's right-hand. He would have persuaded them to chuse everlasting happiness, by the most endearing promises, offering to assist and encourage their weak endeavours, with supernatural helps; but they slighted his invitations, rejected his offers of assistance, continually affronted his mercy, abused his unwearied patience, injured and derided his most tender compassions. Alas! what dreadful fears and apprehensions will these wretched sinners have, when the son of God shall pronounce judgment against them. And,

This judgment shall be universal; for he will judge the world. It will include both good and bad. Some shall rise to everlasting life, others to eternal shame. Persons of all ages, times, places, characters, qualities, and conditions, without exemption or excuse, must appear before the seat of this judgment. No gift can bribe this judge, no power resist him, no eloquence importune him to stop or delay his proceedings; but he will immediately, impartially, uncontroulably give an irreversible sentence on all flesh, from whom no appeal can lie. As for nations and kingdoms God will judge them only in this life. For societies can only have a subsistence in the present world; therefore as their public management and behaviour have

a tendency, either to advance God's glory, or reflect on him diſhonour and contempt, ſo will he reward or puniſh them here; becauſe bodies politic will not exiſt in another ſtate. Indeed, ſingle perſons ſhall be puniſhed in the next ſtate, for what ſins they committed as members of the public body; but then every kingdom will only here have its ſhare of the divine favours or judgments, while it continues in a national capacity. A kingdom by wiſe laws may protect, preſerve, and promote the public true worſhip of God, and ſuppreſs atheiſm, profaneneſs, irreligion and idolatry; and by encouraging virtue and puniſhing vice, it may countenance the holy and innocent, and be a terror to evil doers. When any nation purſues theſe excellent deſigns, God generally makes them victorious over foreign enemies, or bleſſes them with peace at home, riches and plenty. But if any people deſpiſe the public ſervice of God, or by negligence and indifferency ſuffer the purity of divine worſhip to be depraved and corrupted with the inventions of men; he then uſually removes from them the light of his goſpel, permits them to grope in darkneſs and error, to be deluded with vanity and ſuperſtition, for not rightly eſtimating the bleſſings he beſtowed.

The time of this judgment is alſo fixed, "God having appointed a day." But this is kept ſecret; for "of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the "angels in heaven, nor the ſon, but the father." The reaſons why God conceals the day of judgment from us, are the ſame as his not letting us know the particular time of our death; namely, that men might not fall under horrors and conſternations, at the near approach of that day; and alſo that not knowing when it ſhall come, to make them to be always in due preparation for it. Did we know the preciſe day of our death, the thoughts thereof would

would continually rack and perplex our mind. We ſhould have no appetite to ſtudy or buſineſs, and all neceſſary employments for the benefit of ourſelves and others in this life would be laid aſide. No advantage from the invention or improvement of arts and ſciences, or the wiſe adminiſtration of public affairs, could ever have been expected from thoſe who have greatly benefited the world, had they foreſeen, that death would have cut them off in the flower of their age. And had the particular time of the laſt judgment been declared from the beginning, the firſt ages of mankind would have been but coldly affected with the conſideration of it; the moſt dreadful dangers, when at a remote diſtance, making but little impreſſion on the minds of men; or did we know the certain time, the apprehenſion of it would fill us with ſuch dread and horror, that we ſhould neglect the enacting good laws for the public uſe, and neither build, plant, or cultivate the earth, for the benefit of poſterity. God therefore in great wiſdom hath left the times of death and judgment uncertain to us; that as we may not ceaſe moderately to ſtudy and labour, to procure decent and modeſt ſupplies for the neceſſities and conveniencies of ourſelves and poſterity; ſo we ſhould conſtantly join the ſervice of God with the buſineſs of this life, and with reſigned minds, wait, and diligently prepare ourſelves for the time of our diſſolution. O happy ſhall we be, if we have truly repented, unfeignedly believed the holy goſpel, and faithfully performed our duty; for then we ſhall be found acceptable to our gracious God, when he puts an end to our preſent life, and calls us to an account. Laſtly,

All will be judged by a law or rule the moſt juſt and equal; for "he will judge the world in righte-"ouſneſs." The law, by which men will be judged, is the will of God, diſcovered to ſome by ſupernatural

tural revelation, to others by the light of nature: and the rule the divine will proceeds by, will be moſt juſt and equal; 1ſt, becauſe God will judge men, only for that part of his will which they knew, for he will try us by our own conſcience, which will either accuſe or excuſe us; but no man's conſcience will accuſe him of tranſgreſſing laws, whereof he was invincibly ignorant. So that no one will be judged and condemned for want of the light which he never had. 2dly, Becauſe it is an eaſy rule. What God requires of man, is not only poſſible and practicable, but by the help of his grace, very eaſy: no man ſhall be ſentenced for what was not in his power, but for acts proceeding from his will, againſt God's righteous laws. 3dly, Becauſe it is a reaſonable rule. God has made nothing our duty but what directly tends to procure and increaſe our private happineſs, to advance and promote the peace and welfare of ſociety; all the evils in the world owing their original to ſin. Thus I have proved the certainty of a future judgment, repreſented who ſhall be our judge, and on whom judgment ſhall paſs; ſhewn that there is a day appointed for this great work, and that the whole proceeding ſhall be according to righteouſneſs. I ſhall now make a few inferences from this diſcourſe.

"And however ſinners may live, as if they believed not a judgment to come, yet the greateſt of them cannot but ſometimes tremble at the apprehenſions of it. Men may pretend to outbrave hell and eternity at a diſtance, laugh at our diſcourſes concerning another world, and think it a piece of wit and gallantry to diſbelieve theſe things; but who dare look damnation in the face, when within proſpect of it? There is a time when all men acknowledge the power of religion; and if not to believe, yet to fear a hell. Atheiſm and profane-

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neſs may paſs current when no danger appears; whilſt mens pulſes beat ſtrong, their years run briſkly on, their condition is eaſy and proſperous; they go on in their ſins without controul, not conſidering the fatal conſequence. But if trouble and adverſity happen to them; if their proſperity fails them, and the iniquity of their ways begins to encompaſs them round about; if age and infirmities make them to think ſeriouſly on what they have done, and where they are going; then all their ſchemes preſently vaniſh, and they awake like men out of a deep ſleep; and if not convinced of a judgment to come, yet tremble with horror leſt there ſhould be one.—Indeed, where is the ſoul ſo well eſtabliſhed, ſo ſecure of its own ſincerity, as to be able to endure the terrors of that day? when even the world itſelf ſhall tremble and fall into its antient chaos; when the ſun, and moon, and ſtars ſhall be darkened; the mountains ſhall quake, and the powers of heaven be ſhaken; when the earth ſhall be ſet on fire, the heavens ſhall be ſhrivelled up as a ſcroll, the elements alſo ſhall melt with fervent heat." When the "trumpet ſhall ſound, the graves be opened, and the dead ariſe;" when our conſciences ſhall fly in our faces, and repreſent to us the ſins we have committed, the means and opportunities of repentance which we have neglected, and the everlaſting puniſhment to which we are ready to be condemned."

"O the terrors of that day! when being diſtracted with theſe amazements, we ſhall in vain cry out to the mountains to fall upon us, and to the hills to cover us;" when we ſhall ſee no hope or comfort remaining. If we look up to heaven, that place which we now deſpiſe, and ſhall not then be able to approach; there we ſhall behold our judge ſurrounded with his holy angels, pronouncing

ing the dreadful ſentence of indignation, wrath, and eternal miſery againſt us. If we caſt our eyes below, nothing is to be ſeen but the wretched companions of our miſery, " weeping, and wail-" ing, and gnaſhing of teeth." The fire burſting out in which we are to periſh, and the devils ready to drag us into that place of torments. How ſhall we then curſe our ſins that have brought us into this deſperate ſtate of miſery, and too late begin to conſider the wiſdom of thoſe happy men, who in time thought of and provided for eternity? " We fools counted their lives madneſs, and their latter end to be without honour." We once laughed at their folly, and at their mortifying themſelves in penitential exerciſes; whilſt we freely indulged our eaſe and debauches. But now they are " numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the ſaints."

" And when all theſe, and infinitely more terrors than I am able to expreſs, are included in that one thought, of the judgment to come; canſt thou, O wretched ſinner, hear me reaſoning of theſe things, and not tremble at the apprehenſion of them? and if the thoughts of a judgment to come be thus dreadful now, how ſhould we provide againſt the time, when we muſt all appear before it? Let this reflection engage us all to examine our paſt lives, and ſo to judge ourſelves, that we may not be condemned for ever. Let us whilſt we have time, " confeſs our wickedneſs, and be ſorry for our ſins. Let us turn from our evil ways, that our iniquity may not be our ruin."

Let then the conſideration of a judgment day continually influence our lives. For this will mightily tend to make us ſincere Chriſtians, faithful ſubjects, true friends, good men in every capacity,

pacity, and to behave honeſtly in all the ſtations and ſtages of life. This will ſet a watch over our thoughts and lips, becauſe our thoughts and words ſhall be examined and have ſentence paſs on them. For how can we cheriſh malice in our hearts againſt them who have offended us, if we conſider how greatly we ſhall ſtand in need of the mercy and favour of God, at his judgment-ſeat, who will not then forgive us, unleſs we now forgive them? to them who do judgment without mercy, he will ſhew no mercy. How can we deliberately cheat, wrong, and defraud our neighbour; when we ſhall be utterly ruined, if beſides doing juſtice, we do not at the laſt day find pity and compaſſion in our judge? Why ſhould we be ſo intent to heap up riches, when we ſhall be ſoon taken from them; and ſo far from their being of uſe to us at the judgment-day, that the more we poſſeſs of them, the more difficult will be the paſſing of our accounts? We have alſo as little reaſon to entertain vain and high thoughts of ourſelves; ſince God gives his grace to the humble and meek, but abhors the proud, and at the laſt day will condemn them: or, that we ſhould defile ourſelves with brutiſh luſts; ſince our judge is too pure to behold iniquity; and we know that only the pure in heart ſhall be admitted to ſee God. Laſtly, as the thoughts of the day of judgment will preſerve us from notorious ſins; ſo a view to the infinite rewards good men ſhall then receive, will ſupport our minds under all afflictions; and endue them with fortitude and conſtancy to perſevere in every righteous honeſt cauſe.

May then a fervent, ſincere zeal for God's honour, for the preſervation of his pure religion, and for obtaining the ſalvation of our own ſouls, prevail with us, by the help of his holy ſpirit, to

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forſake all our ſins, and entirely conform our minds and practice to the holy will of God; that at Chriſt's ſecond coming to judge the world, we may be found pure and blameleſs, and be admitted by him into the manſions of eternal bliſs.

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe CXXIX. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Of the HAPPINESS of HEAVEN.

1 John iii. 2.

It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know that when he ſhall appear we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is.

THE circumſtances of our future happineſs and glory are not perfectly revealed to us; only thus much in general is diſcovered, that we ſhall be very happy, becauſe we ſhall be admitted to the immediate ſight and enjoyment of God; and we cannot ſee and enjoy him, unleſs we are like him, and then we muſt be happy. We know that when he ſhall appear, or when it ſhall appear what our future happineſs is, that we ſhall be like God, for we ſhall ſee him as he is. I ſhall at this time firſt repreſent, as perfectly as I can, the happineſs of heaven; I ſhall then ſhew, how we may attain this happineſs: and, laſtly, I will conſider what effect the ſerious thoughts of this bleſſed ſtate ought to have on our lives.—And firſt, as to the happineſs of heaven. But what, and how great this is, I am not able to repreſent. It does not now fully appear what we ſhall be. The ſcriptures have revealed ſo much in general concerning the reality and unſpeakable felicities of this ſtate, as may ſatisfy us

for the preſent, and ſerve to inflame our deſires, and excite our endeavours to obtain it. As that it is vaſtly beyond any happineſs of this world; eternal, and far above all we can conceive and imagine.

It is vaſtly beyond any happineſs of this world. It is free from whatever may abate and allay the felicities of this life. All the enjoyments of this world are mixed, uncertain, and unſatisfying; ſo far from giving us true ſatisfaction, that the ſweeteſt of them do but ſatiate and cloy us. None of the comforts of this life are pure and unmixed; there is ſomething of vanity mixed with all our earthly enjoyments, which cauſeth vexation of ſpirit: There is no ſenſual pleaſure, but is either purchaſed by pain, and attended with, or ends in it. A great eſtate cannot be acquired without much care, not kept without fear, or loſt without trouble. Greatneſs and dignity is troubleſome, being uneaſy to them who have it, and generally hated and envied by thoſe who have it not. Knowledge, the beſt and ſweeteſt pleaſure of human life, yet if we will believe the experience of one who had more of it than any other man; he aſſures us, that this "alſo is vexation of ſpirit; for in much wiſdom there is much grief, and he that encreaſeth knowledge encreaſeth ſorrow." Thus the beſt things in this world have a mixture of good and evil, joy and ſorrow in them; but the happineſs of the next life, is free from allays and mixtures. "In the new Jeruſalem, there ſhall be no more curſe, and no night there;" nothing to embitter our bleſſings, or obſcure our glory. Heaven is the proper region of happineſs, the only place of pure joys and unmingled felicity. But the enjoyments of this world are uncertain, wavering and inconſtant; when we think ourſelves moſt ſecure of them, they ſlip from us we know not how. Solomon very elegantly calls them, things "that are not; why wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon

upon that which is not? For riches certainly make to themselves wings, and fly away, like an eagle towards heaven." Riches are often accessary to our own ruin. The greatness of a man's estate, and nothing else, hath often been the cause of losing both the life and estate of the owner. So that he who enjoys the greatest temporal happiness, still wants one happiness more, namely, to be able to secure to himself for the future, what he possesses for the present. But the happiness of heaven is steady and constant, fixed and unchangeable, as the fountain from whence it springs, "with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning." And if the enjoyments of this life were certain, yet they are unsatisfying. This is the vanity of vanities," that every thing here can trouble us, but nothing can give us satisfaction. For we are neither pleased with the things of this world, nor yet content without them. If we are hungry it pains us; if we eat to the full, we are uneasy: if we are poor we think ourselves miserable, and when we come to be rich, we really are so: if in a low condition, we fret and murmur; and if by chance we are raised to greatness, we are generally farther from contentment than before. So that we pursue the happiness of this world, as little children chase birds; when we think it near us, and almost in our hand, it flies farther from us than at the first; nay, so far are temporal enjoyments from affording us satisfaction, that the sweetest of them are apt to satiate and cloy us. The pleasures of this world are so contrived, as to yield us very little happiness; if they depart soon, they signify nothing; if they stay long, we are sick of them. After a full swing of sensual pleasure we loath it, and after the enjoyment, hate it as much as we court d and longed for it in expectation. But the delights of another world will give full satisfaction, without making

us weary of them. Every repetition will be accompanied with new pleaſure and contentment. In the felicities of heaven two things will be reconciled, which never was in any ſenſual delight, namely, long and full enjoyment, and yet a freſh and perpetual pleaſure. As in God's "preſence there is fulneſs of joy, ſo at his right-hand are pleaſures forever more."

The happineſs of the other world is alſo very great in itſelf. The ſcripture deſcribes the happineſs of heaven, by ſuch pleaſures as are manly and excellent, chaſte and intellectual, infinitely more pure and refined than thoſe of ſenſe. And when it makes uſe of the metaphors of feaſt, banquet, and marriage, it is by way of accommodation to our weakneſs, and in condeſcention to our capacities. But this happineſs, ſo far as the ſcripture hath revealed it, conſiſts in the perfection of our knowledge, the height of our love, the perpetual ſociety and friendſhip of the bleſſed inhabitants of thoſe glorious manſions, and the joyful concurrence of all theſe in chearful expreſſions of gratitude, in inceſſant praiſes and admiration of the fountain and author thereof. And what can be more delightful than to have our underſtandings entertained with a ſight of the beſt and moſt perfect being, with the knowledge of all his works, and the wiſe deſign of his providence: than to live in the reviving preſence of God, to be continually attending on him whoſe favour is life, and whoſe glory as much exceeds the greateſt princes of this world, as they do the pooreſt worm? Not that I imagine the happineſs of heaven to conſiſt in a perpetual gazing on God, in an idle contemplation on that glorious place. For as we ſhall be infinitely tranſported with that bleſſed light, ſo likewiſe ſhall we be transformed into the image of the divine perfections; we ſhall ſee God, and be like him. And what greater happineſs

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can there be, than to be like the happiest and most perfect being, who we need not doubt will find out such employments and delights in the other world, as shall be proper and suitable to that state?

But then besides the improvement of our knowledge, there will be the most delightful exercise of love. In heaven we shall associate with the blessed angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, who are free from those passions and infirmities, which here attend the very best of men. We shall there meet with all those excellent persons, those brave, virtuous and charitable souls, whom we have seen, heard, and read of in this world. There we shall meet with many of our dear relations and intimate friends; perhaps also with many of our enemies, to whom we shall then be perfectly reconciled, notwithstanding our warm and peevish disputes here, even about religion. For heaven is a state of perfect love and friendship, of mutual kindness and good-nature; a place where we may converse freely, without folly or disguise, jealousy or design. There will be no covetousness and ambition, envy and hatred, wrath or peevishness, which here so much disturb and interrupt the peace and quiet of mankind. All quarrels and contentions, schisms and divisions will there cease; not composed by force and compulsion, but by that love and charity which never fails. And all religious controversies, which are here so warmly debated, will then finally be determined; not as is now done, by canons and decrees, but by perfect knowledge and convincing light. And when this blessed society is thus met, united in love, they will all join in gratitude to their great patron and benefactor, "to him that sits on the throne, and to the lamb that was slain, to God even our father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." And they shall sing eternal songs of

praiſe to God for all his works of wonder, for the effects of that ſtupendous goodneſs, infinite wiſdom, almighty power, ſo evident and conſpicuous in the creation and government of the world; in particular for his favours to mankind, for the benefit of their beings, the comfort of their lives, and all his merciful providences towards them; but above all for the redemption of their ſouls by the death of his Son, for the free forgiveneſs of their ſins, the gracious aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, and for conducting them ſafely thro' all the ſnares, dangers, troubles, and temptations of this world, to the ſecure poſſeſſion of that glory and happineſs they are to partake of, and for which they will praiſe God to all eternity. This will be the employment of the bleſſed above, this their chief happineſs, according to the ſcriptures. And were there no other, as perhaps there may be ten thouſand more, yet generous and virtuous minds will find pleaſure enough in improving their knowledge, in exerciſing their love, in gratefully and perpetually acknowledging the greateſt benefits that creatures can poſſibly receive. And

This happineſs ſhall be eternal. Tho' this is but a circumſtance, and not the nature of our happineſs, yet without it, all the felicities of heaven would be imperfect. It would ſtrangely damp and allay our joys, were we certain they ſhould ſome time have an end. And the more perfect our happineſs was, the more trouble it would afford us to conſider it muſt have a period. Indeed, was the happineſs of heaven like the pleaſures of this world, which after a little enjoyment cloy and ſatiate us, it would be an advantage to have it ſhort; but being ſo excellent, the happineſs would be very imperfect, unleſs it were eternal. It would vaſtly diminiſh the pleaſures of heaven, great as they are, to ſee an end of them, tho' never ſo diſtant; to conſider that they will one day be exhauſted and have an end.

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God hath so appointed, that the vain and empty delights of this world should be temporary and transient; but that the great and substantial pleasures of the next, shall be lasting as they are excellent. For heaven is an exceeding, eternal weight of glory; and to be secured in the eternal possession of our happiness is an unspeakable addition to it. O vast eternity! how dost thou swallow our thoughts, and entertain us at once, with delight and amazement? This is the summit of our happiness, on which we may stand secure to view all things here below; and how inconsiderable will they then appear to us, in comparison of the vast and endless enjoyments of our future state? Vain and foolish men then that we are! to be so little concerned for eternity, as that for the trifles of time, and the "pleasures of sin which are but for a moment," to forfeit an everlasting inheritance: who fondly chuse to gratify our lusts rather than save our souls; and madly prefer the temporary enjoyments of sin, before a blessed immortality.

Lastly, this happiness far exceeds any thing we can conceive or imagine. We cannot from the experience of any earthly pleasures and delights, frame an equal idea and conception of it; the felicities and glories of heaven transcending all the fame we ever heard of in this world. For who can say how great a good God is? and how happy he can make those who love him, and whom he loves? In this imperfect state we are not capable of a full representation of those glories. Now we cannot see God, and live. A full description of the pleasures and joys of heaven is too great for our narrow capacities, too strong for weak mortality to bear. "We are now but children and know but in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect shall be done away. Now we see thro' a glass

darkly, but then we ſhall ſee face to face, and ſhall know even as we are known." I proceed,

To ſhew how, and by what means we may attain this happineſs. And that in ſhort is, by the conſtant and ſincere endeavours of a holy life, in and thro' the mercies of God by our Lord Jeſus. Chriſt indeed is the author of our ſalvation, but obedience is the condition thereof. It is the grace of God in the goſpel which brings or offers this ſalvation to us; but then it is by "denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, by living ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world, that we are to wait for the bleſſed hope. The pure in heart ſhall be bleſſed, for they ſhall ſee God;" but "without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord." To ſee God is to be happy, but we cannot ſee him, unleſs we are like him. The ſight and preſence of God, would be no happineſs to him who is not like God in the temper and diſpoſition of his mind; and "every man that hath this hope, purifieth himſelf as God is pure." So that if we live wickedly, and allow ourſelves in any known ſin, we interrupt our hopes of heaven, and render ourſelves unfit for eternal life. We thereby defeat all the deſigns of God's grace and mercy, and ſalvation itſelf cannot ſave us, if we neglect that happineſs which God offers. Before we can enjoy the promiſed inheritance, we muſt be prepared for, and "made meet to be partakers of it." And this life is the time of our preparation for a future ſtate. Our ſouls will continue forever, what we make them in this world. Such a temper and diſpoſition of mind as a man carries with him out of this world, he ſhall retain in the next. Heaven indeed perfects thoſe holy and virtuous diſpoſitions that are begun here; but the other world alters no man's main ſtate; "he that is filthy will be filthy ſtill, and he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous ſtill." If we do not mortify our luſts

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and passions here, death will not kill them for us, but we shall carry them into the next world. And was God to admit us into heaven unqualified, yet our sins would hinder us from being happy. Our sensual inclinations and desires would meet with nothing there suitable to them, and the appetites we brought with us, will perpetually torment us, for want of something to gratify them. For "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The happiness of heaven consists in such things as a wicked man cannot relish: and was a covetous, ambitious, or voluptuous man in heaven, he would be like the rich man in hell, tormented with the flames of his own ardent desires, and not able to find in that place of plentiful treasures, one suitable pleasure and delight to allay his heat, or gratify his inclinations. The same also, as to our fierce and unruly passions; were we to carry them there with us, how inconsistent would they be with happiness? not only making ourselves miserable, but be very troublesome to those we should converse with; for was a man of an envious, malicious, and passionate temper admitted into those blissful mansions, he would not only be unhappy himself, but disturb the quiet of others, and raise storms in those calm regions. Vain man! to dream of being happy, without any disposition or preparation for it. To be happy, is to enjoy what we desire; to live with whom we love. But heaven is directly contrary to the desires and appetites of a wicked man. The joys and delights of that place are purely spiritual, not to be relished by the carnal and sensual. So that the pleasures of heaven would signify nothing to him who is not disposed to take pleasure in them. Heaven is too pure for corrupt souls, a place both unsuitable and unacceptable to a vicious, wicked person. We see then how necessary it is, that we should prepare ourselves for this blessed state, by a

constant

conſtant, ſincere endeavour to lead a holy life, and by mortifying every luſt and inordinate paſſion: for till then we are not meet to be partakers of the felicities in heaven. I ſhall now conſider what effect the ſerious thoughts of this bleſſed ſtate ought to have on our lives. And,

It ſhould tend to convince us of the vanity of this life. God hath on purpoſe made this world troubleſome and uneaſy to us, that there might be no ſufficient temptation to reaſonable and conſiderate men, to become careleſs of their future happineſs; that God and heaven might have no rival here, to divert our affection from everlaſting life and glory. When death approaches, and eternity preſents itſelf to our ſerious thoughts, the things we now ſo much eſteem, will then appear to be of no value; and what we have neglected, to be of infinite concern, worthy the care and endeavour of our whole lives. And if we duly conſider theſe things in time, we might be convinced of the vanity of this world, before we deſpair of the happineſs of the other.

It ſhould alſo make us active and induſtrious to be good, and to do all poſſible good in this life, that we may be qualified and diſpoſed for the happineſs of the next. Men are generally very induſtrious to be rich and great in this world; but did we value heaven as it deſerves, we ſhould take infinitely more pains for that than the other. If we conſider the glories above, how muſt it condemn our folly, that we are leſs concerned for our ſouls, and an eternal inheritance, than for our bodies, and things corruptible? Let us remember how ſhort our time is here, and that when we die, eternal happineſs is what we then hope for; a reward enough to excite our endeavours after it. Would we often repreſent to our minds, the glories of heaven, what fervors

vors ſhould we feel in our hearts? with what alacrity ſhould we obey God's will? almoſt with the ſame readineſs and delight as do the angels, who "continually behold the face of their father which "is heaven." The conſideration and firm perſuaſion of our future happineſs, ſhould actuate and invigorate all the powers of our ſouls, in the ways of holineſs and virtue. It ſhould ſtrengthen our reſolutions, and confirm our purpoſes of obedience, to conſider, that if we have our fruit unto holineſs, our end will be everlaſting life. It ought to mitigate and alleviate the evils and afflictions of this life. If the way is rough, yet it leads to happineſs. And the ſcripture aſſures us, that the "ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed in us." Temporal evils afflict us more or leſs, according as the ſoul is fortified with proper conſiderations to ſupport us under them. If we conſider that we are here as on a journey, travelling to our heavenly country, where we ſhall meet with inconceiveable delights and pleaſures; it ſhould not trouble us much, tho' our way thither be full of rubs and difficulties, this being the common fate of travellers. And when we are ſafely landed in our own country, with what pleaſure ſhall we reflect on the difficulties and dangers we have encountered and eſcaped? the more troubles we have met with, the kinder uſage we ſhall find at our father's houſe. When we come to heaven our happineſs ſhall be far greater and more laſting than all our miſeries here on earth. So the apoſtle aſſures us, "that our light afflictions which are but for a moment, ſhall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And what ſignifies it, tho' we ſuffer in this world, provided we eſcape endleſs torments; tho' we have not our good things here, ſo as infinitely greater

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are reſerved for us hereafter. Was it not for this hope, the evils and calamities of this life would indeed be inſufferable; and Chriſtians would of all men, and "of all creatures, be the moſt miſerable." But our religion abundantly aſſures us to the contrary: And this is what made the primitive Chriſtians to embrace ſufferings with much chearfulneſs, to "glory in tribulation, to take joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring ſubſtance." Laſtly,

The conſideration of a future ſtate of happineſs, ſhould arm us againſt the fears of death. Death is terrible to nature, and the fearful apprehenſions of what may follow, infinitely encreaſes its terrors. But the comfortable hopes of bleſſed immortality, ſtrangely relieves the fainting ſpirits of dying men, reconciles us to death, and abates our fears. The thoughts of death are diſmal even to good men, who ſtand in need of comfort and encouragement, when conflicting with this laſt enemy; and to a dying man no conſideration is ſo comfortable as the hopes of eternal happineſs. He who conſiders death as a paſſage to glory, ſhould welcome its meſſengers, as bringing the beſt and moſt joyful news; and leave this world with greater pleaſure than to remain in it. Thus it evidently appears, that the future happineſs of good men is incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world; great in itſelf, eternal in its duration, and far exceeding any thing we can now conceive or imagine. And yet I am very ſenſible that what has been ſaid, falls vaſtly ſhort of the greatneſs and dignity of the thing. A ſubject, on which we ſhould be continually meditating. For unworthy ſhall we be of heaven, and unfit to partake of ſo great glory, if we take not pleaſure in the contemplation of thoſe things now,

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the poſſeſſion whereof will be our happineſs forever.

With what joy then ſhould we think of thoſe "great and glorious things which God hath prepared for them that love him, of that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away, reſerved for us in the heavens? How ſhould we welcome that happy hour, when we ſhall eſcape from theſe priſons, and paſs out of this "howling wilderneſs into the promiſed land;" when we ſhall be removed from the troubles and temptations of a wicked ill-natured world; when we ſhall be ſecure from all ſtorms and tempeſts, and ſafely landed in the regions of bliſs and immortality? O bleſſed time! "when all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, and death and ſorrow ſhall be no more;" when mortality ſhall be ſwallowed up of life, and we ſhall enter on the poſſeſſion of all that happineſs and glory which God hath promiſed, which our faith hath believed, and our hopes have given us expectation of. When we ſhall be eaſed of all our pains, reſolved in all our doubts, cleanſed from all our ſins, freed from all our fears, happy beyond our hopes, and that happineſs ſecured to us, to all eternity. When we ſhall know God without ſtudy, love him and one another without meaſure, ſerve and praiſe him without wearineſs, and obey his will without reluctancy. When we ſhall daily be more and more delighted, in knowing, loving, praiſing and obeying God to all eternity.

How ſhould theſe thoughts affect our hearts, and influence our lives? The great diſadvantage of arguments taken from the conſiderations of another world, is the vaſt diſtance of thoſe things, and there not being ſenſible to us; and therefore they are not apt ſo ſtrongly and powerfully to affect and work upon us. But to make amends

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for this diſadvantage, we ſhould often revive and inculcate on our minds, the reality and certainty, the infinite weight and importance of them. We ſhould reaſon thus with ourſelves; if good men ſhall be ſo unſpeakably happy, and wicked men ſo extremely miſerable in another world; if theſe things will one day be found true, why ſhould not we act as if they were already preſent? Why ſhould not we now, as much fear to commit any ſin, as if hell was naked before us, and we beheld the aſtoniſhing miſeries of the damned? And why ſhould we not be as careful to ſerve God and keep his commandments, as if heaven was open to our views, and we ſaw Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God, with crowns of glory in his hand, ready to be placed on the heads of all thoſe who continue faithful to him? The apprehenſions of the certainty and nearneſs of death and eternity, are apt to make our thoughts more quick and piercing, and according as we think ourſelves prepared for our future ſtate, to tranſport us with joy, or amaze us with horror. The ſoul that is fully ſatisfied of his future bliſs, has begun to take poſſeſſion of glory, and may ſay with old Simeon, "Lord, now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation!" But the thoughts of death muſt needs be terrible to him who is doubtful or deſpairing of his future condition. It would daunt the ſtouteſt heart, to look on death, when beyond it nothing appears but hell. When the apparition told Saul, "to-morrow thou and thy ſons ſhall be with me," theſe words ſo affected him, that "he fell down "to the ground, and there was no ſtrength left in "him." It is as certain that we ſhall die, as if an expreſs meſſenger from the other world appeared to every one of us, to tell us ſo. Why then ſhould we not always live as thoſe that muſt die,

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hope to be happy after death? Let us then "have our converſation in heaven, from whence alſo we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things to himſelf. For we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is."

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe CXXX. Mr. *Dorrington.*

The MISERY and ETERNITY of FUTURE PUNISHMENTS.

Mat. xxv. 46.

These ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal.

IT has pleaſed the great governor of the world, to require our homage and obedience, as the juſt and reaſonable condition of enjoying his preſent and future favour. In order to enforce our obedience, and that we may be entitled to ſuch ineſtimable bleſſings, God has repreſented to us the terrors of his anger, and declared how ſeverely he will puniſh obſtinate and impenitent ſinners. Our Saviour, after giving a particular deſcription of the great and univerſal day of judgment, and of the iſſue and reſult thereof, ſays; that the wicked ſhall "go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the "righteous into life eternal." Theſe two different fates will be the event of the laſt judgment, and include all mankind. To one of theſe ſtates all our actions tend. I ſhall only at preſent conſider the final ſad portion of wicked men, as to their future puniſhment; and the duration thereof. This I ſhall endeavour to repreſent as the ſame appears from ſcripture, without any regard to uncertain conjectures, which have no real foundation. And this being a ſubject the moſt important, we ought to

to be very ſerious and attentive to what is ſaid; ſince we are preſuming to enquire what will be the certain end and conſequence of a wicked life; and to what a diſmal ſtate innumerable perſons will bring themſelves, by careleſsly or obſtinately living in a courſe of known wilful and preſumptuous ſin. If we by faith look into the eternal priſons of the damned, we may by this view be deterred from the ways of ſin; for by ſeeing the miſerable end of other mens folly, we may learn wiſdom, and their miſery may occaſion our happineſs. The nature and condition of this place of puniſhment, we are allowed to repreſent ſo far as the ſcripture informs us.

And firſt, it is a place of horrid darkneſs. Our Saviour, ſpeaking of the final puniſhment, which the hardened unbelieving Jews, and other wicked men would bring on themſelves, expreſſed it by their being caſt into outer darkneſs. St. Jude alſo tells us, that the "blackneſs of darkneſs forever is reſerved," as a puniſhment for the apoſtate angels. To underſtand theſe places literally, is but reaſonable, becauſe they repreſent the places ſuitable to the deſign of it. Darkneſs will agree with a place of puniſhment and miſery. Light is a chearful pleaſant thing, but darkneſs is ſad and melancholy. As light and glory will no doubt adorn the happy manſions of heaven, ſo we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that a diſmal darkneſs will fully the deep caves of hell. It is alſo ſaid to be filled with fire. Our Saviour, who will at the laſt judgment be our judge, intimates, that the puniſhment of ſinners will be everlaſting fire. And St. Jude ſays, of ſome notorious ſinners, that they were ſuffering "the vengeance of eternal fire." Indeed, the nature of this fire we cannot preſume to deſcribe; but as it is a fire prepared for the devil and his angels, who are ſpirits, we may ſuppoſe it ſuch, as is able to afflict a ſpirit with a great ſenſe of

torment and pain. And it must also be such as to affect and punish the separate souls of men, while their bodies remain dissolved into dust. It is a peculiar terrible fire, or something which divine wrath has made to be his instrument to punish his wicked and rebellious creatures. The scripture describes this fire, by "a lake of fire and brimstone, "by a furnace of fire." So that this must be a dreadful place of punishment, which is prepared for sinners. O how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God! who of us can dwell with devouring fire! who can endure everlasting burnings!

But if any are so obstinate, as that they will not understand these expressions literally, yet thus much they cannot deny; that as the holy scriptures represent the joys and felicities of heaven, by things the most pleasant and delightful here, which yet fall vastly short of the happiness of heaven; so it represents future punishments by things the most sad and terrible in this world; and we may then reasonable suppose, that these punishments will be much more dreadful, than what is made use of to describe them. From the darkness and fire which are said to be in hell, we may safely conclude, that it is a place sad, melancholy, and full of horror; destitute of all joy and comfort; and where the condemned wretches shall enjoy nothing pleasant or delightful; but be severely punished and afflicted both in body and soul. This will be the miserable end of guilty mirth and pleasures, the final reward of that wickedness which is here thought to be so pleasing and delightful. Thus should we believe as to a place of future punishments, that the nature and condition of it is such, as to render it most dreadful and horrible. And this will more clearly appear, by considering the company and society of them who dwell there, which extremely adds to the misery

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and puniſhment of hell. The holy ſcripture informs us, that wicked men ſhall be condemned and caſt into that place of puniſhment which is prepared for the devil and his angels. So that the ſociety of hell is a company of wicked men and devils. All the angels that firſt rebelled againſt their maker; all obſtinate and impenitent ſinners, that in all ages of the world did ever die ſuch, will be confined in hell, to live there together. What woeful miſerable company muſt theſe be, ſince no comfort, delight, or pleaſure can be derived from them, but they will rather greatly encreaſe the unhappineſs of each other? this we muſt conclude from their being all extremely wicked, malicious, and utterly miſerable.

The company in hell are deſperately wicked and malicious, hating each other. They are all in a ſtate of war, and enemies to one another. Peace, love, order, and government are things too good and happy for that place; but eternal diſcords and furious contentions, continually prevail and reign there. The exquiſite pain and torment which all endure, will excite their rage and cruelty one againſt another. Perhaps the devils inſult over the damned, by telling them what hopes of happineſs they are fallen from, what offers of favour and mercy, even of heaven itſelf, they have refuſed; how they have trifled away that time on earth, in which they might have gained an everlaſting happineſs, and loſt their immortal ſouls, thro' an exceſſive vain care for their bodies. And we may likewiſe ſuppoſe that the damned will curſe thoſe apoſtate ſpirits, for their falſe ſuggeſtions, importunate temptations, and for being greatly acceſſary to their ruin and damnation, by bringing on them the wrath and vengeance of God. Thoſe companions in wickedneſs, who here delighted in each other, will be there the moſt hateful and uneaſy company. This ſeems to be

torment and pain. And it must also be such as to affect and punish the separate souls of men, while their bodies remain dissolved into dust. It is a peculiar terrible fire, or something which divine wrath has made to be his instrument to punish his wicked and rebellious creatures. The scripture describes this fire, by "a lake of fire and brimstone, "by a furnace of fire." So that this must be a dreadful place of punishment, which is prepared for sinners. O how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God! who of us can dwell with devouring fire! who can endure everlasting burnings!

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The company in hell are desperately wicked and malicious, hating each other. They are all in a state of war, and enemies to one another. Peace, love, order, and government are things too good and happy for that place; but eternal discords and furious contentions, continually prevail and reign there. The exquisite pain and torment which all endure, will excite their rage and cruelty one against another. Perhaps the devils insult over the damned, by telling them what hopes of happiness they are fallen from, what offers of favour and mercy, even of heaven itself, they have refused; how they have trifled away that time on earth, in which they might have gained an everlasting happiness, and lost their immortal souls, thro' an excessive vain care for their bodies. And we may likewise suppose that the damned will curse those apostate spirits, for their false suggestions, importunate temptations, and for being greatly accessary to their ruin and damnation, by bringing on them the wrath and vengeance of God. Those companions in wickedness, who here delighted in each other, will be there the most hateful and uneasy company. This seems to be

suggested by our Saviour's parable of the rich man, who was greatly concerned lest his brethren should come in that place of torment.

Those who tempted and encouraged one another to sin, who hardened each other to contemn and reject all good instruction and wholsome reproof, will, when they come to the end of their misery, hate one another for these things, which before they despised. He who, by fair pretences, covered a false, hypocritical heart, and passed here for a saint, will be sadly ashamed, when those who knew him, shall at last find him in hell. Emperors and kings, generals and commanders, the rich, noble and mighty, who have lived wickedly here, will there be huddled, mixed, and confounded among the most vulgar mortals; these will be levelled with their vassals, with those they have commanded or disdained, and be subject to their contemptful reproaches. No order, no respect of persons, no love, pity and compassion is to be found in hell; no kindness and good-nature appear there; nothing but misery and mutual hatred. These things are the natural products and effects of extreme wickedness; and from hence the company in hell must certainly be very wretched and miserable. What a torment must it be, for implacable, furious enemies, for those who are full of envy, malice, and rage, to be confined together in one close prison? This society must also be very uneasy to one another, because they are thus perfectly miserable, and can associate with none but what are so. How dreadful must it be, to live forever with those who are in continual torment! how dismal, to be eternally confined in this dark and gloomy house of mourning, amidst the howlings and woeful complaints of tortured, despairing creatures? How shocking to our ears, to hear their doleful groans and endless cries! how terrifying and frightful a spectacle, to behold

behold each other surrounded with fire, and burning in flame unquenchable? To see the distorted agonizing looks which such torments produce in every face? But the miserable unhappy state of the damned will be yet more apparent, if we consider,

Those infernal miseries which arise from the temper and disposition of their minds. These as they are more near and intimate, so we may justly believe them to be more sensible and tormenting, than any yet mentioned. The hardened sinner being here abandoned to his vices, lusts and passions, and dying possessed of them, must therefore expect to remain subject to them for ever. Wicked lusts and passions are the distempers of the soul, which discompose its pleasing harmony, disturb its peace, filling it with discord and confusion. In their nature they deprive a man of all tranquility and peace, make him such a torment to himself, that he has no enjoyment. A violent, unsatiable desire, is what constantly attends every lust and passion? And what greater torment can there be, than violent eager desire? But to desire a multitude of things, and yet to be disappointed therein, is what the damned are sentenced to endure forever. The sinner may even in hell desire and wish for his sensual delights, which being deprived of, he may feel a torment like hunger never satisfied, or thirst unquenchable. He may remember his guilty frolicks with remorse, and the causes of his present misery, which perhaps will make him wish they had endured for ever. He may remember with regret how soon they were gone, and mourn that such transient, short and fading delights, were all that he, an immortal being, shall ever enjoy. Our Saviour assures us, that there "is weeping and gnashing of teeth in "hell." This is the deplorable case of sinners. They live in doleful anguish of mind, can perceive nor

think of nothing but what gives them grief and ſorrow. They mourn when they conſider what they were and might have been; what they did enjoy, and muſt now forever endure. It is very probable, that ſinners in hell are tranſported with vain rage againſt almighty God, for dealing ſo ſeverely with them; ſince we may obſerve, how ſuch here, when they meet with any conſiderable affliction, or diſappointment, will bid defiance to heaven. Thus a paſſionate, vicious mind, may be a ſevere torment to the ſinner in hell; as he will continually deſire what he ſhall never obtain, and wiſh to avoid what he is eternally confined to.

Another torment of mind, which the ſinner muſt endure in a future ſtate of puniſhment, is bitter deſpair. His own thoughts tell him he muſt ſuffer forever, and he has in continual remembrance the eternity of his miſery. His own mind aſſures him that all his beloved pleaſures and joys are gone forever, and he finds himſelf condemned to a diſmal place, to a moſt miſerable ſociety of wicked ſpirits. As his condition is truly deſperate, ſo deſpair takes poſſeſſion of his ſoul, to afflict and torment it. He cannot obtain ſo much allay and eaſe, as even to be deceived with a falſe hope. For he will know that the torments he endures ſhall laſt forever. He will always remember the terrible ſentence of the judge, which has doomed him to everlaſting miſery. As hope can alleviate the heavieſt griefs, and give ſome eaſe under the acuteſt pains; ſo deſpair will render every light evil intolerable. And this muſt greatly aggravate the ſevere torments of hell. Laſtly, the ſelf-condemnation and rebukes of the ſinner's own conſcience, is what will vaſtly add to their miſery. This is what the ſcripture means by the worm that never dies. Tho' the condemned ſinner is angry with God, for dealing as he thinks

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unjustly, or too severely with him; yet he also highly blames himself, for provoking and drawing on him the terrible wrath of God. As God never destines any men to misery, nor passes any irreversible decree of punishment on sinners, till they die impenitent; so the thought that they ruined and destroyed themselves, is what will greatly enhance the torments of the damned. They will sadly lament their past folly, for having lost their souls for mere trifles. The condemned sinner will then too late perceive, how vain and worthless all those pleasures, profits, and honours were, for which he incurred eternal damnation. He will then think himself a wretched fool, for enjoying a few momentary, transient pleasures, at the expence of losing his soul to all eternity. Thus a sinner's own mind will lash and torment him. And his case must be very deplorable, who has a terrible God for his enemy, and is, besides, confined amongst devils and wicked men, and is also an enemy to himself. Thus I have briefly represented the future punishment of sinners; and if they should not be so terrible as I have described, yet it is better for us to fear the worst that can be said, than feel the least that may be true.

I now proceed to consider the duration of future punishments, which will very much add to the terror of it. The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment. The future miseries of sinners will have no intermission; but as they are to be everlasting, so they will be continual. The condemned wretches will have no respite from torment, no moments of ease or repose; nothing but a sad long night without rest or sleep. The fire, or worm of conscience, will continually torment and gnaw them; they will constantly despair, and be miserably uneasy to one another. Their ears will never be free from the loud sounds of doleful complaints, nor their eyes cease to be

afflicted with horrid spectacles. In this life, those who are most unhappy, have yet some intervals of good to allay the evils they meet with; but in hell there is nothing but pure, unmixed, continual misery. This the scripture assures us, the wicked "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone. And they shall have no rest day nor night. That is, their torment shall be incessant. The same is also intimated by our Saviour's parable of the rich man who was cast into hell; whose torment was greatly aggravated, in not being able to obtain so small a refreshment, as a little water to cool his tongue for a moment. The almighty can never be weary of punishing; his wrath towards condemned wretches, will not abate or diminish; nor yet the sinners sense of their miseries, grow less by their duration. Those who are in hell have not the virtue of patience to fortify and compose their minds under affliction; nor the least glimpse of hope to allay their sorrows. The weary traveller indeed, tho' tired in his journey, is yet comforted when near arrived to his home; but the damned are not so, they having no prospect of any end to their miseries. How dreadful and terrible is this? O let us then often and deliberately consider an affair of such weight and importance; that it may have a suitable impression on us! what will never end, and yet may suddenly begin, unless prevented by repentance, deserves the most serious consideration. Let us then fix our thoughts a while on this important concern; that of a vast and endless duration; an unmeasureable and amazing eternity. O eternity! a thing not to be fathomed by our thoughts, or expressed by our words. No space of time that can be imagined is able to measure this duration. Were every grain of sand in all the oceans of the world to be computed, it could

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not make up the number of years which eternity comprehends. All this would bear no proportion to it. When the ſinner has lain thus long in miſery he muſt ſtill remain there for a perpetual duration. Eternity will not waſte and decay as time does. And ſinners have always an eternity of torments to expect and endure. O how terrible and dreadful then muſt hell be! how ought it now to amaze and affect us! But tho' future puniſhments are moſt evidently and expreſsly revealed in holy ſcripture, yet men are very unwilling to believe it, and ſtrive all they can, to cavil at and oppoſe what really is moſt clear and certain. There are ſome who conjecture that ſinners will be conſumed in hell-fire, or turned into nothing. But this is a vain imagination; it being evident, that mankind are endued with immortal ſouls, and deſigned to endure forever. This is the excellency and dignity of our nature. And the ſcriptures alſo aſſure us, that there will be a reſurrection both of the juſt and unjuſt. The bodies of wicked men will be raiſed and reunited to their immortal ſouls; and at the reſurrection, what before was corruptible will then become incorruptible and immortal. But this need not be, were they not to endure forever. For can we ſuppoſe that the bodies of wicked men ſhould be raiſed immortal, only to appear before God's tribunal, and immediately after judgment, to be conſumed in hell-fire? Beſides, the ſcripture aſſures us, that the puniſhment of ſinners is everlaſting; but this is only poſſible on beings that exiſt to all eternity: For what does not exiſt, cannot be ſaid to ſuffer puniſhment. The apoſtle declares, that ſinners ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction; which would be a very improper expreſſion, if they were only to be everlaſtingly deſtroyed. Others object and ſay, that it is unſuitable to the exact juſtice of God, to puniſh the ſhort and tranſient

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ſins of men in this life, with endleſs torment in the next. To this I anſwer, that no government in the world ever thought it a rule to be obſerved in puniſhing, according to equity and juſtice, that the pain and penalty inflicted, ſhould laſt no longer than the time which any ſin took in committing. And therefore ſome have been puniſhed with death, others baniſhed and impriſoned, for crimes which were committed in a ſhort ſpace of time. Would men ſeriouſly conſider the vile and heinous nature of ſin; the excellency of the perſon againſt whom it is committed, even God, a being of infinite perfection; the meanneſs of us who oppoſe and affront him by our wickedneſs; and the many obligations we lie under to love, ſerve, and obey him: If theſe things are duly conſidered, we muſt acknowledge, that eternal puniſhment is what ought juſtly to be inflicted for our ſins and vile enormities.

Since then, the rewards and puniſhments of our life on earth, will be without end; of what great importance is it for us ſeriouſly to reflect on and conſider this, and to behave here with the greateſt exactneſs. How ſolicitous ſhould we be to be ſaved, and to avoid eternal miſery? How careful of our life and actions; always to do well, and abſtain from evil! how ſhould it excite us ſpeedily to repent of our evil ways, and ſtrive to forſake them! O let us conſider to how much miſery we are obnoxious, unleſs we repent! that nothing but the uncertain remainder of a frail life, ſtands between us and endleſs miſery! that we know not but the next moment may be our laſt; which if ſo, and we die impenitent, we are forever undone. As yet life is propoſed to us; for life and death are ſet before us, that we may chuſe either. We are aſſured, that wicked men ſhall go away "into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal;

nal;" on purpose that we may fear and strive to avoid the former, desire and obtain the happiness of the latter: which if we neglect, our punishment will be the more exceedingly aggravated.

As I have briefly, but yet imperfectly described the misery of the wicked, it may also conduce to many good purposes, shortly to represent the happiness of the blessed. All good souls, on their departure hence, will rest from their labours, and enter into a state of peace and rest. Their labour was in this life; their reward will be in the next. Governors will then be eased of the burden and trouble that attends government; the labourer will rest his weary limbs; the servant be free from his master. That labour and care which was necessary to provide for and support this mortal body, will then have an end forever. In heaven there is no eye that weeps, no tongue that complains, no breast that swells with disconsolate sighs; no sufferings shall afflict or annoy the happy soul. He is delivered from the pains and diseases of the body; he is not troubled with the treachery of seeming friends, nor with the death or alteration of real ones. God will "wipe away all tears from his eyes, and there shall be no more death, sorrow, nor pain." The good man indeed leaves all his worldly enjoyments, and his body in the dust; but then he also parts with the troubles, affliction, and evils of this life; he is delivered from all the allurements and temptations to sin. The happy saint, when removed from this world, is perfectly safe from his adversary the devil, who here "goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." And having fought the good fight of faith, and finished his course, there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, with which God will reward him at the last day. And how pleasing, how transporting must it be! to see himself, after much labour and many dangers, arrived to a place

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of perfect reſt, ſafety, and true felicity? when he remembers what terrible conflicts he ſuſtained againſt the enemies of his ſalvation; how often he was overcome by them, and yet, at laſt, got a final victory. This reflection muſt afford abundant pleaſure and ſatisfaction to every happy departed ſoul.

The place to which the ſouls of good men are conveyed, is to an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. A place ſerene and calm, beautiful and harmonious; a bright eternal day will there conſtantly ſhine, without the aid of ſun or moon; for the glory of God will enlighten it, and that of the lamb our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. A good man at his death, may ſay, "If I muſt leave my deareſt friends and relations, part with the moſt glorious palaces, the moſt delightful proſpects, the moſt agreeable gardens, the richeſt furniture, and every thing that can render this life commodious, pleaſant and happy; yet when I arrive to this heavenly place, I ſhall not miſs, but even contemn all I left behind me. For I ſhall then enjoy and eternally live with the moſt excellent ſociety; with the prophets and apoſtles, with the noble army of martyrs and confeſſors. Perhaps I ſhall meet with many dear relations, intimate friends, and it may be ſome enemies, to whom I ſhall be perfectly reconciled. I ſhall enjoy the company of all good men that ever lived, even "a great multitude of all na-"tions, people and languages." In the heavenly Jeruſalem, there ſhall not enter any "thing that defileth, that loveth or maketh a lye." No pride or envy, malice or treachery, ambition or covetouſneſs, will ever come to diſturb that holy place. All the company there are ſaints perfected in glory. All the wickedneſs of men and devils, all thoſe paſſions and vices which diſquiet this world, and hinder the pleaſure of ſociety and converſation, will be then forever baniſhed. The company of heaven

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are fully ſatisfied with their own happineſs, and by mutual love entirely pleaſed with the glory and felicity of each other.

And with what raviſhing converſation, with what endearing and delightful diſcourſe, may we ſuppoſe ſuch excellent happy ſpirits to entertain each other? and their unanimous concurrence, in offering their higheſt praiſes to God, muſt vaſtly enhance the pleaſure and delight of one another. The company of the bleſſed do with moſt chearful voice join in their united praiſes to the high God, for his infinite perfections, and wonderful goodneſs to the children of men. O happy place! O bleſſed ſociety! who would not wiſh and long to be there? who would not "deſire to depart, and "be with Chriſt? To be abſent from the body, pre-"ſent with the Lord?" To be conducted on our departure hence to the mighty Jeſus, the glorious king of heaven, the great lover of ſouls; who will receive us with the moſt raviſhing demonſtrations of kindneſs. To him who ſo loved us, as to deſcend from heaven, and die, that he might redeem and ſave us; who here ſanctifies and guides us by his Holy Spirit, bears with much patience our many infirmities and offences; and who therefore we need not doubt will embrace us with the greateſt love; and ſay, "well done, good and faithful ſer-"vant, enter thou into thy maſter's joy."

SOME

SOME

Occaſional Diſcourſes.

Diſc. CXXXI. Abp. *Herring.*

Rom. i. 32.

Who, knowing the judgment of God (that they who commit ſuch things are worthy of death) not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in thoſe that do them.

WHOEVER is converſant in the hiſtory of the Roman nation, will ſee, that it was impoſſible, in general, to have given a juſter deſcription of the ſtate of morality among them in the days of their decline, than this, which the apoſtle has given us, in the chapter from whence the text is taken. They were once a very brave and gallant people, famed for the ſtrictneſs of their morals and their public virtue; and, though they were in the errors of heatheniſm, yet they had light enough amongſt them to diſcern the traces and obligations of natural religion; and, if their practice had been ſuitable to their knowledge, would have maintained that grandeur, which their integrity firſt acquired them. But, notwithſtanding all their advantages, they ſunk, by degrees, into the very dregs of corruption, and became as infamous and con-

contemn'd for their vices, as they were once admired and feared for their virtues.

The apoſtle here has given us a very ſad picture of them, but it is drawn to the life; and one might juſtify the deſcription in every part of it, from the ſatyrical writings of their own authors.

"They knew God, he tells us; and it is certain, that many amongſt them had very clear, very excellent notions of the divinity; but then, they glorified him not, as God, neither were thankful, neither their lives nor their worſhip was ſuitable to their knowledge; but they became vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh hearts were darkened, profeſſing themſelves wiſe they became fools, and fell, in ſpite of their underſtandings, into the moſt fearful practices of idolatry and immorality." Wherefore God alſo gave them up unto uncleanneſs, unto vile affections, to diſhonour their own bodies between themſelves, (a moſt prodigious inſtance of their corrupted hearts;) "as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God (in his moſt juſt diſpleaſure) gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do thoſe things which were ſhocking and abominable, being filled with all unrighteouſneſs," ſtraining their inventions in the ſervice of it) "fornication, wickedneſs, covetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whiſperers, back-biters, haters of God, deſpiteful, proud boaſters, (full of conceit of their own excellencies) inventors of evil things, diſobedient to parents, without underſtanding," (ſtupid and unmoved as to every thing that was truly wiſe and good) "covenant-breakers, (no faith nor integrity!) without even natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."—Melancholy and aſtoniſhing deſcription of that corrupted ſtate! enough to make the ears of every one that hears it tingle. But this is not all; there is a worſe circumſtance ſtill behind;

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" Who, knowing the judgment of God (that they " who commit ſuch things are worthy of death) " not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in thoſe " that do them." It was not enough, it ſeems, to ſin with an high hand themſelves againſt plain knowledge, and the clear dictates of conſcience, but they muſt propagate their vices, make proſelytes to their abominable practices, and place their great pleaſure and ſatisfaction in making others as bad and corrupted as themſelves.—This is the text—My obſervation from it ſhall be this; viz.

—That it is the higheſt aggravation of wickedneſs, and, of all others, the worſt ſymptom in a corrupted nation, to commit iniquity againſt plain and clear knowledge, and to be eager and ſtudious in its propagation.—The apoſtle here cloſes the moſt ſhocking deſcription, that one can imagine, of the immorality of the Romans, by this very aggravating circumſtance, " that knowing, &c." —Now this, I ſay, and I ſpeak it by St. Paul's authority, is wickedneſs in its higheſt character and complexion, and one of the worſt ſymptoms that can appear in the body of a corrupted nation.

Firſt, Becauſe it is the moſt outrageous inſolence, and a ſort of defiance of the juſtice and government of God almighty, and ſeems to beſpeak a very ſignal and ſpeedy puniſhment.

It is aggravating more than enough, to ſin againſt plain knowledge, and the clear informations of our conſcience, and, without any conſideration of the power and majeſty of God, of the honour of his government, of the authority and reaſonableneſs of his laws, to neglect and deſpiſe them; and to violate the ſacred obligations of morality, and the repeated injunctions of our bleſſed Saviour, by conſtant and habitual practice.—But to proceed farther ſtill in iniquity; not only to do theſe things ourſelves, but to have pleaſure in thoſe that do them.

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—To lend our hearts, and our hands, and our example, to the furtherance of this accused work:—this must needs in a peculiar manner provoke the displeasure of God Almighty, and call down the vengeance of his justice on us. The honour of his laws, and the majesty of his government require, that such a rebellious spirit as this should be very signally corrected.

It is the method of God's providence, and perfectly suitable to the justice and goodness of his nature, in his dealings with the nations of the earth, to try all possible means of repentance; by gentle reproof, by instruction, by knowledge, by long-suffering, to awaken sinners to their duty; and, when all proves ineffectual, he appeals to man himself, whether punishment is not the proper remedy.

"O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, "judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vine-"yard; what could I have done more to my vine-"yard than I have done in it? Wherefore, when I "looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought "it forth wild grapes?"

If all the gentle methods of cultivation will not make man better, nothing but punishment and amputation can be expected.

It shews a most desperate and inveterate spirit of wickedness in a nation, to withstand all the methods of God's grace, and to grow rather worse by his mercy. If the prophets understood the matter, nothing is a more sure forerunner of God's judgments, than such a spirit as the apostle has reproved here in the gentiles.

It seems, it was sometimes stirring in the Jewish state; who, as knowing as they were, were yet rather more wicked than other people, not only doing the things that were abominable, but taking pleasure in those that did them.

" They have choſen their own ways, ſays God, " and their ſoul delighteth in their abomination: I " will alſo chuſe their deluſions, and (ſince they " will have it ſo) they ſhall be filled with the fruit " of their own doings."

The prophet Jeremy gives a very obſervable bad character of them, for he tells us expreſsly, that they were arrived at ſuch a prodigious pitch of iniquity, that they loſt one of the beſt reſtraints of their virtue, even their natural modeſty. " They " were not aſhamed, neither could they bluſh."

" Shall not I viſit for theſe things, ſaith the " Lord, and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch " a nation as this."

" Return ye now every one from his evil way, " and make your ways and your doings good." —This was the condeſcention of God's mercy; but hear the anſwer of an obſtinate and rebellious ſpirit: " And they ſaid there is no hope, but we will walk " after our own devices, and we will every one do " the imagination of his evil heart.—Now all theſe " things happened unto them for enſamples, and " they are written for our admonition, upon whom " the ends of the world are come. We are ſure " that the judgment of God is according to truth, " againſt them which commit ſuch things: for if " we ſin wilfully after that we have received the " knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more " ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain fearful looking-for " of judgment."

Reaſon and ſcripture, and hiſtory agree in this, that there are certain times, when the iniquities of nations are full, when the patience of God has had her perfect work, and when they are ripe for deſtruction; and, aſſuredly, their time muſt be drawing on apace, and the meaſure of their iniquity be ſwollen to a great degree, who not only practiſe all the

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ways of immorality without restraint, or modesty, or consideration, but take pleasure in those that do them; are delighted with men that follow their bad examples, and endeavour to diffuse the spirit of wickedness among all around them.

But, secondly, not to insist upon the judgments of God, which are far above out of our sight, and, thro' his infinite patience are not executed speedily against every evil work, I observe further, that such a spirit of immorality as this, that is not content with the practice of wickedness itself, but takes pleasure to propagate and diffuse its influence, is one of the surest arguments of a declining nation, and does naturally pave the way to its destruction.

The reason of it is as clear as the sun; for, had God himself never interposed, and our blessed Saviour never appeared in the world to sanctify and encourage goodness, yet it is absolutely impossible for any society to maintain itself, but upon the principles of morality and virtue.

And therefore it is a very lamentable thing, and ought to alarm Christians exceedingly, for the honour of God, for the credit of their holy religion, for the welfare of their common country, when they see these important principles contemn'd and trampled on; when they see the general bent of a people giving their united vote in favour of vice and wickedness, delighting themselves in the spirit of them, and with an eager pleasure encouraging, applauding, and rewarding every attempt to propagate them.

What can be expected from such a dangerous disposition as this, especially when it appears to be almost national and general, but that the bands of government must be loosened, all peace and order destroyed, authority and magistracy despised and rendered ineffectual, and the best of men made

a prey to the injuſtice, the violence, the exceſſes, the lewdneſs of the worſt?

Before the old Roman Government had its period, the ſigns of its deſtruction were long foreſeen, in the corrupt manners of the people. It is mentioned, and by ſome believed, to the honour of the emperor Auguſtus, that, when he had eſtabliſhed the public tranquility, he was for ſome time in ſuſpence, whether he ſhould reſtore the Romans to their liberties or not. But, upon mature deliberation, he found the thing impracticable: they were ſo corrupted by a long civil war, ſo torn to pieces by the workings of inveterate factions, and ſo licentious in their manners, as to be incapable of being governed by fixed laws, or reſtrained in any tolerable order but by abſolute and arbitrary power. It may paſs for an invariable truth in the political ſurvey of nations, that when they are deſtined to be undone, or loſe their liberties, the ſeeds of their deſtruction are firſt ſeen in the profligate manners of their members: and, if ſo, let any man of goodneſs and underſtanding judge, whether we ought not to dread the conſequence of that corruption of all kinds that now ſo generally prevails amongſt us.—But not to confine ourſelves to the fate of any particular country, we may ranſack hiſtory in every language of the earth, and turn over all the volumes of polity and government; we ſhall find at laſt, that it is impoſſible for any people to maintain their ground, but by ſupporting the fear and reverence of God, and upholding the majeſty of religion; for government can ſubſiſt no otherwiſe, than upon the principles of order, and peace, and juſtice, and a ſobriety and temperance in the morals of all its members.

We are prodigiouſly alarmed at any thing that affects our peace immediately, and exceeding ſtudious we are to put a ſtop to any direct attempts upon

upon it: as if a rebellion againſt our government (tho' in truth, of the moſt intereſting conſequence) was of greater moment to us than ſuch an avowed rebellion againſt God!—againſt God?—Such a ſpirit of wickedneſs, as I am ſpeaking of, is an immediate rebellion againſt government: for what is government, when the people are taught to be immoral both by writings and example; when all reverence of God is neglected, when the majeſty of religion is itſelf ſtruck at, and its moſt ſacred and affecting ſanctions forgot or weakened; when ſobriety and frugality and temperance of life are, as it were, put under public ridicule and cenſure, and the loweſt of men encouraged in the imitation of the exceſſes and lewdneſs of the higheſt?---I ſay, when ſuch a ſpirit of wickedneſs as this poſſeſſes the minds, and is ſeen to actuate a people----what is government? Where is the authority of the magiſtrate? To what purpoſe do we preach, and do ye believe? Of what importance is it, and how weak will it be to oppoſe, with arguments drawn from reaſon and ſcripture, ſuch a torrent as this? To what end is it, to talk of the fear of God, of the authority of our bleſſed Saviour, the excellency of our religion, and the importance of another life? To what purpoſe do we recommend juſtice, good-nature, induſtry, contentedneſs, and a ſobriety of life and manners, as the beſt ſocial virtues, and the very foundation of our preſent happineſs? We may preſs theſe things from the pulpit, and they will be borne with there, as the proper buſineſs of the day, and place they come from; but the impreſſion, if any, is made in ſand, and the characters wrote in duſt, to be blown away by the wind. For, alas! what ſignify ſuch arguments as theſe to people intoxicated with vice, whoſe natural diſpoſitions are corrupted, whoſe minds are darkened, whoſe ears ſhut, and whoſe conſciences are ſear'd

againſt all ſuch good and friendly admonitions, by the officious pains, and miſchievous example of thoſe, who not only practiſe the worſt immoralities themſelves, but take pleaſure in thoſe that do them, and maintain and cheriſh this ſpirit of confuſion in its full life and vigour? 'Tis an argument of a very deſperate temper in men, and ſhews that their public virtue is fallen exceeding low, when they appear ſo cordially in the intereſt of vice.

We of this preſent generation may perhaps not live to ſee the ruin of our country; but this is very certain, that the loſs of our public virtue is an undoubted mark of its approach; and, however it may fare with us, poor poſterity may feel the ſmart of it, and perhaps curſe the memory of us their anceſtors, for ſetting ſuch a deſtructive example in our diſpoſitions, and the conduct of our lives.

And this is more particularly to be feared and lamented by all wiſe and ſober men, when they obſerve this deadly contagion, this affectionate love of wickedneſs in a nation, not to be confined to the lower orders of men, but to ſpread its infection among thoſe of rank and character.

Where the vulgar only is infected (wicked and ignorant as they are, too often, by education, by their buſineſs, and by their converſation) authority and prudence and inſtruction may reſtore them: but what room is left to reform their manners, when authority and example is, as it were, gone over to their party, and they can plead the ſanction of their worſt and moſt miſchievous vices from the applauſe and encouragement of the great ones?

This, aſſuredly, (where-ever the caſe happens) is an inſtance of a people being thoroughly corrupted in their manners, when men of high characters, of the beſt education, moſt improved underſtandings, and moſt enlightened knowledge, ſeem (as to any regards to virtue and religion) to be upon the level

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with the lowest and most abandoned, and exactly in the mean and sordid and shameful sentiments of the very dregs of the common people.—"Ah! sinful nation! a people laden with iniquity, a seed "of evil-doers; the whole head is sick, and the "whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot, "even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, "but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores; a "general rottenness and corruption of life and manners."---Thus it was in the Roman state, when the apostle gave the description of it, and finished the mortifying picture by this aggravating stroke, that, "knowing the judgment of God, &c."

What has been hitherto said, was suggested to my mind from the public character which I read to you out of scripture, of an ancient and most illustrious people.

I would to God, I had found myself at a loss for a particular application, and that I had been forced to have strained my invention, to have sent my thought abroad, or to have searched into the musty records of antiquity, to have made or found a national character parallel to this, which is drawn of the Romans by the great apostle of the Gentiles. —But the pains of enquiry were spared me, and my home reflections furnished me with too much matter and too ready an application to ourselves, and our own concerns; and it was not possible for me to fix my eyes upon the original, without being struck and startled at the exactness of the copy.---But this perhaps will not be easily allowed me; and I shall be asked, why these gloomy reflections, this hard satire upon our native country? And where are to be discerned those marks of decay and ruin in it, which can at all support its comparison to this, now extinguished, nation? Our public happiness is apparent, and as well secured as possible by the arts of human prudence; our esta-

bliſhed religion, in profeſſion, wiſe and reaſonable, and truly chriſtian; the conſtitution of our ſtate admirably calculated for the ſupport of a free and manly government, and the execution of it in the hands of a good king, by inclination and noble nature the parent of his country; our people are free, our laws wiſe, our property ſafe, our commerce flouriſhing, our ſtrength formidable, our riches prodigious.——Now all this is extremely true; but ſtill this beautiful ſtructure of our commonwealth, of ſo goodly outward appearance, may be unſafe in its main foundation; and moſt unqueſtionably is ſo, if our people are abandoned in their morals, the objects of divine diſpleaſure, undeſerving and forſaken of the good providence of God; for, in that dangerous and doubtful ſituation, neither the beſt magiſtrates, nor the beſt laws, nor the largeſt ſupply of wealth, nor the moſt ſuperior power can ſupport us long. Under a virtuous adminiſtration of things indeed, when religion and integrity have their proper influence, theſe are the great bulwarks of ſociety: but, on the contrary, if men, with ſo many encouragements and opportunities of doing better in their hands, will grow worſe and more degenerate in their practices, and, like the Roman people here referred to, in the pride and fulneſs of proſperity, will not only commit thoſe things that are worthy of death, "but take pleaſure in thoſe that do them," and propagate every vice that can be named, and ſome that ought not, by the contagious enchantment of bad example; theſe very advantagious circumſtances may become the occaſion of more ſpeedy ruin: for wealth, and law, and power, in the hands of wickedneſs, are very dangerous inſtruments of miſchief; and ſuch is the poiſonous nature of vice and immorality, that they can convert the natural means

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of health and felicity, both in public and private life, into certain diſeaſe and death.

There was a time when the inhabitants of this famous iſland had the character of a ſober and virtuous people, and of having diſpoſitions very well turned to receive ſo good a religion as the chriſtian is; but thoſe excellencies ſeem to be departing from us; our natural tempers are corrupted; and, by imitating none of the beſt of our neighbours, in ſome of the worſt of their qualities, we ſeem, for ſome years, to have been running apace into all the fooliſh and hurtful vices, which irreligion and vanity, and perfidy and unbounded licentiouſneſs can teach us; and that very liberty (which, rightly treated, is in natural friendſhip and alliance with true religion and the public weal) we abuſe and proſtitute moſt vilely to every dirty purpoſe of faction and immorality; as if we were ſtudious to ſhew, that liberty was a bleſſing too good for us, and that our minds were too low and ſordid to enjoy ſo gracious and ſo divine a privilege. But, to ſpeak the truth, and not heighten our diſeaſe by diſguiſing it, the virtue of our nation is moſt apparently in a declining ſtate; religion has loſt its power upon the heart, and, by the moſt natural conſequence, things every day proceed from bad to worſe; magiſtracy is contemned, dignity and order ſunk to the common level, adultery and vagrant uncleanneſs is become an epidemical evil, and, by the ſhameleſs practice, the good ends of God's inſtitution are defeated, the numbers of the people are diminiſhed, opulent and noble families undone, our children are ungovernable, our ſervants extravagant, and idle, and unfaithful. Intemperance, as habitual as general, debilitates and ſpoils the ſtrain of the people; the public peace is diſquieted, daily robberies interrupt the repoſe of the city and the country, and, (O! ſhame to government!) murder itſelf is very frequently

quently committed in the ſtreets of this great capital, almoſt under the ſeat and throne of magiſtracy.—But thus it will be, in ſpite of laws, and in ſpite of the ſword of juſtice, till we bethink ourſelves a little ſeriouſly, begin a reformation every man upon himſelf and in his own family, increaſe the power and ſupport the majeſty of true religion, preſerve the order and dignity of ſocial life, and lay the foundation of better times in the prudent education of our children, and the wiſe government of our ſervants.—And, with regard to our chriſtianity, and the awful and awakening intereſts dependant on it, the plain truth is, we muſt either mend our manners, or our very profeſſion of it will become a jeſt.—We are ſometimes apt, in a good mood, to value ourſelves upon our religion, talk of being proteſtants, and reformed from the errors of a corrupted church. 'Tis very well?—But whatever errors we have forſaken, if we don't amend our lives, our worſt errors will be ſtill behind; and (bating the frightful zeal of perſecution, the complexion of popiſh piety) a ſober and regular, tho' weak and deluded romaniſt, is a character very preferable to a looſe and immoral proteſtant, in all the pride of his liberty and knowledge. For it will be a terrible charge upon us, and our ſins will riſe up in judgment with moſt provoking aggravation, that we went beyond other people in wickedneſs as well as knowledge, continued in our ſins in ſpite of the cleareſt inſtruction and beſt religion, and tho' knowing, &c.

We are now called upon by the voice of authority, concurring with the ſenſe of every ſober and chriſtian man in the kingdom, to examine our conſciences, conſider our ways, and, in a juſt conviction of our ſuperlative wickedneſs, to humble ourſelves before the throne of mercy, to promiſe future amendment, and deprecate the wrath of a juſtly

juſtly offended deity.—The vials of his anger have not yet been pour'd out, but ſome drops of his indignation have fallen on us, the preludes, perhaps, and forerunners, if not timely prevented, of a ſweeping and deſtroying ſtorm. The life of our excellent king has been ſtruck at, our country waſted, and the blood of our fellow-ſubjects ſpilt by the ſons of rapine; its honour and credit proſtituted to our worſt and moſt inveterate enemy; and the very being of our laws and conſtitution (the baſis of our property and freedom for half a century) threatened to be overturned and cancelled. —But it has pleaſed God to redeem us from theſe dreadful evils, and to work a deliverance for us, as ſudden and ſurpriſing as our danger was.—But, for all this, "his anger is not turned away, but his "hand is ſtretched out ſtill."---The terrors of a foreign enemy ſurround us, and even our domeſtic ones, are conquered indeed, but not diſpirited; their rage is turned into deſpair, their inſolence is increaſed, they deſpiſe and reject the mercy of the government, plainly ſhewing, that they have ſecret reſource of hope, and only wait the favourable opportunity of ſome fatal diſaſter to our arms, or breach in our alliances (which God avert, in his mercy) to riſe up and finiſh the ruin of their native country. Add to this, the very grievous ſickneſs, which, for a long time, has waſted and continues to diminiſh a moſt uſeful and important part of our property, which baffles all our ſkill, and defies every experiment to remedy, and may, poſſibly, end in a contagion ſtill more fatal to us, and depopulate our cities, as this does our fields and paſtures.—— Theſe things added together, the furious deſpair, the perfidy and boldneſs of our enemies at home, the ſpirit and ſucceſs of thoſe abroad, a deſtroying murrain preying upon the vitals of our country, and the little proſpect, that is ſeen, of a reformation

mation in our lives and manners, evidently ſhew, that our evils are but ſuſpended; that God has ſtill a controverſy with us, and that nothing can aſſure us of the Divine favour and protection, or of any ſtability to our fluctuating affairs, but conſideration and a ſober mind, and breaking off our unrighteouſneſs by repentance. God alone determines the fate of nations, who deſtroys or builds them up, according to his good pleaſure; but, his immediate interpoſition apart, reaſon and revelation and experience confirm this truth to us, that public virtue is public proſperity, and ruin inſeparably annexed to vice; and therefore, under the bleſſing of the divine aſſiſtance, if we would preſerve our country, and deliver our religion and laws in any degree of ſafety to poſterity, we muſt ſet about the work by a ſerious and ſincere reformation:---Compared to this, the arts of human policy, the councils in the courts of princes, are weak and ſhort-ſighted, and the execution of the beſt-digeſted ſchemes precarious and of moſt uncertain iſſue; but the public virtue of a nation, bleſſed by the providence of God, is ſtrength invincible, and wiſdom not to be controlled.---Let this day then begin this general duty, and let it be exemplified by every man in himſelf and in his family. Religion is much the ſubject of our enquiry and converſation: Let it reach and animate the heart, as well as exerciſe the tongue and underſtanding. Nothing ſhews ſo much the wiſdom of a man, in every circumſtance of life, "from him that weareth purple and a "crown, to him that is clothed with a linen "frock," as a rectitude of life and manners; and, after all our boaſting of love, and regard to our country, he is the beſt citizen, who is the beſt man, both in his public and his private character.

To

To this care of our moral and chriſtian conduct, let us add a wiſe and well-governed zeal for our government; let us ſtudy the value of our laws; let us remember how much blood and treaſure they coſt our wiſe and good forefathers, to gain and to preſerve them to us their children, and let us hold them faſt againſt every attempt of tyranny and abſolute dominion. We have a watchful and envious neighbour near us, who, for ſome years, not content with draining the heart's blood of his own country, and ſacrificing the lives of half his ſubjects to a wanton and lawleſs ambition, is meditating the ſame chains for Europe; and yet the cruelty of his deſigns is far ſhort of their perfidy; ---for ſuch is his ſhameleſs breach of treaties, as is not to be parallel'd in antient ſtory, no, tho' you look into the annals of his own predeceſſors. We, tho' at a diſtance, have a feeling evidence of this, and a ſhare more than enough in the calamities which this domineering power has occaſioned round him. What a profuſion of treaſure! what a frightful waſte of the lives of innocent men; what an hated form of government, where the caprice and ambition of one puny man ſhall deſolate and depopulate whole countries! Let this reflection, and this painful feeling teach us the value of our own conſtitution; let us hold it faſt 'till we die, and guard againſt every attempt to deſtroy it, whether it be by open force, or the ſlower, but more effectual, methods of deceit and corruption. One is afraid of the very commerce and correſpondence with ſuch a nation as we are now ſpeaking of; there is a danger in it greater, perhaps, than from their enmity.—The vanity, the looſeneſs, the perfidy, the libertiniſm, the abject and fawning manners of the people, are good for nothing but to ſpoil the ſpirits of men, and to break them gradually to an unmanly government; and it behoves us to look well

well about us, that our connections with them don't debauch and hurt us;---connections which, of late years, have inſenſibly gained ground upon us, whether ariſing from the expenſive and idle curioſity of travel, or from the correſpondence of a trade, hurtful to us, but a rich mine to them; or from retaining ſervants of that country and religion in our families, to the unkind and undeſerved reproach of our own people; or from a ſlaviſh fondneſs for their language, unbecoming the freedom and grandeur of the Britiſh nation; or a love to their fantaſtick faſhions.---Whatever be the reaſon of our attachments, it is extremely neceſſary to break looſe from them, eſpecially as we ſee ourſelves ſurrounded with faithleſs and domeſtic enemies, who, for their own ſhameleſs purpoſes, are laviſh in the praiſes of this people, ſtudy to conciliate our minds to them, and to introduce their ſcheme of government, and, ſupported by their infamous alliance, diſtreſs and harraſs and weaken, and try every method to enſlave their own free and happy country.

Deſpotic government, founded in hereditary right, where one man's will is every man's miſery, is not more miſchievous, than it is abſurd. There is reaſon and ſpirit, and liberty in law, and it is not only eſſential to every man's property, but, without it, there can be no ſuch thing as virtue or religion in the world.

If our conſtitution is ſo valuable, how much more is our religion? And how inſeparable is that and the happineſs of our country? I ſpeak of it now chiefly in oppoſition to popery; the ſtrange and alarming ſpreading of which, is our greateſt and moſt immediate danger. No nation (ſpeaking in the groſs) can poſſibly be happy and flouriſhing under Popery; becauſe the influence of it is of ſo baneful a nature, that it does not only ſink the ſpirits of men, damp the vigour and life of induſtry, ſtop every avenue to religious knowledge from

from the ſcriptures, make princes tyrants, and their people ſlaves; but it in a manner countermines the wiſdom and goodneſs of providence, and converts (as it has done in fact) the moſt beautiful and fertile countries into deſolate wilderneſſes. And therefore, when we ſet down to recollect ourſelves, and recover our antient character of a ſober and good natured and religious people, let it be our principal care to avoid the contagion of this bad, this abſurd, and, from its miſchievous ſpirit, I muſt call it, this unchriſtian religion: for popery, as a fine writer expreſſes it, "is really an uſurpation upon "chriſtianity, and, like uſurpers, lives within its "guards, inquiſitors, and dragoons; it ſettles and "ſupports itſelf by gibbets, axes, halters, fire and "ſword, and all the inſtruments of death and cruel "execution."

Whatever ſenſe we have of liberty, whatever juſt notion of religion, whatever is left of the ſpirit of chriſtianity amongſt us, we have it from an eſtabliſhment founded upon ſcripture, and the pureſt ages, maintained in a ſpirit of charity and toleration; but, if we ſuffer ourſelves to be enſnared by Popery, and ſubmit to its cruel and imperious dictates, the dye is caſt, and we may eaſily be undone beyond redemption. Nothing therefore imports us more, than to watch the workings of theſe bold inſinuating people, the Romiſh miſſionaries. How long ſhall we bear with theſe unquiet and meddling ſpirits, who are not only troubleſome, but pernicious to us? What do they here, deluding ſilly women, ſpiriting away the children of the nation, or tainting their firſt principles? Captivating the poor by their impertinent and venal charity, and ſeducing the profligate by fallacious promiſes of heaven, by virtue of their fooliſh reliques, and the interceſſion of ſuch ſaints, as either never exiſted, or deſerved to be the ſcorn and ſcandal of the times they

they lived in? Is there no end of their avarice and thirſt of power? And muſt this free and wealthy nation ſubmit for ever to have its peace interrupted and endanger'd, its treaſures drained, and its ſubjects debauched from their natural allegiance by theſe foreign plunderers, theſe ſons of darkneſs, who lurk in the thieviſh corners of the ſtreets, and put on every garb and every character to work their infernal purpoſes; braving our laws and magiſtrates, and, in their gloomy midnight cabals, contriving ſchemes of moſt deſtructive treaſon. ---Theſe peſtilent people, "they are about our "houſe and about our bed, and ſpy out all our "ways;---they enter, by one means or other, into our inmoſt receſſes:---They are like the plague deſcribed by Moſes; "they go up and come into "our houſes, and into our bed-chambers, and upon "our beds, and into the houſes of our ſervants, "and upon our people," and, in different diſguiſes, overſpread the face of the camp, the city, and the country.

The religion, which theſe people are ſo ſtudious to propagate, conſidered merely as ſuch, is as baſe as it is abſurd, and deſerves the ſcorn and contempt of Proteſtants; but that which makes it the terror of all good men, the hatred of all wiſe and humane princes, and miſery of every country where it is eſtabliſhed, is that furious ſpirit of cruelty, which is inſeparably blended and wrought into the Roman polity, and which diſtinguiſhes the Papal government from every other in the world.---Other governments have been inſtituted, however adminiſter'd, for the good and preſervation of men; but the Papal one, ſupported by torture and inquiſition, is planned for, and ſubſiſts by the miſery and deſtruction of them, and is a ſettled and habitual conſpiracy againſt all the princes in the world.---This was the opinion of our wiſe forefathers, this they felt

felt severely, this we feel in some degree, by this our neighbour Protestants suffer daily; and yet, by some fascination, we seem inclined to believe, that Popery is become a mild and good-natur'd thing.--Some of us even apologize for it, and plead for its toleration; tho' every native of England, who is listed into this detestable society and mission, is a rebel to his country's laws, and a traitor to the good king that governs us.

The success therefore of the Romish missionaries, if it goes on, as it does at present, in this deluded country, may be look'd upon as the last, the most avenging scourge of heaven;—the chastisement of a devoted people, who have fill'd up the measure of their iniquities.—This judgment suspended, if our public virtue decays, we may recover it.—If commotions arise at home, wisdom and moderation of government may reduce things into order.——If our constitution is corrupted and hurt, our legislature can redress and mend it.--But if Popery once more lords it over us, there is an end of our nation, our honour, our freedom, our prosperity, our virtue; and it will be an happy circumstance, if our name too be extinguished.

Lastly, Let us remember, that, next under God, union at home, and loyalty and affection to the king and his royal family, are our great and sure defence.—We have seen, God be thanked, that danger, at a perilous crisis, can unite us, and our union save us; and, why should not our common interest at all times do the same? We are brethren, by blood, by country, by religion; why do we strive one against another, and, by our foolish divisions, open the door to an enemy, that we are more than a match for, when united?---The main strength of our neighbour nation is their union, whether it arises from the power and policy of the court, or the affections of the subject; and our division is our

weakneſs. Strange folly and inconſtancy! which does not only expoſe us to the wiles and fraud, and arms of that powerful, reſtleſs and intriguing nation, but even to their ſcorn and deriſion.—To ſee a people bleſſed beyond a parallel with the beſt climate, the ſafeſt ſituation, the moſt extenſive and profitable commerce, the wiſeſt laws, and the beſt-natur'd princes, and the eſtabliſhment of a divine religion, ſacrificing all theſe advantages to, or, as we have felt, endangering them by the little reſentments of party, the narrow, ungenerous views of pride and ambition, and private avarice.—Will no hiſtory, will no experience make us wiſer? Has not this very miſchief ruined many great and mighty nations? Is it not true to a proverb, from the mouth of our Saviour himſelf, "that an houſe "divided againſt itſelf cannot ſtand?" and has not this ſame miſconduct weakened our national power for a long ſeries of years, and brought us more than once, in our memories, upon the brink of deſtruction?—Our enemies indeed were miſtaken lately in their opinion of us; they found us united, when they look'd for a civil war; but what miſchief have we brought upon ourſelves, by giving them room and occaſion for ſuch fooliſh preſumption?—They are now returned to their country with a conviction, that the king has the hearts of his ſubjects; his royal goodneſs gives him a title to them, and will preſerve them loyal to the laſt period of his life. He enjoys his crown by clear and indiſputable inheritance, by the ſanction of laws, by the conſent and with the applauſe of a great nation; and uſes his power and royalty, as becomes a king, that is, as a truſt for the public good. Under his ſhadow we may ſit down ſafely; and, if we are not wanting in our duty to God, if we preſerve integrity of manners, love and honour and practiſe our holy religion, ſupport our free and legal government,

vernment, ſhut the door againſt the wiles and force of Popery, and put a ſpeedy end to thoſe hateful diviſions, (which ſpoil the comfort of our lives, defeat us of the enjoyment of all our natural advantages, and tend directly to our diſſolution) if we do all this, in time we ſhall be as happy as this world can make men, and our government will be as free and independant, and impregnable, as the God of nature has made the ſituation of our iſland.

Diſcourſe CXXXII. Bp. *Sherlock.*

Preached on the 30th of *January.*

Mark iii. 24.

If a kingdom be divided againſt itſelf, that kingdom cannot ſtand.

THO' theſe words are read in the goſpel, yet they have not their authority merely from thence; but for the truth of the obſervation contained in them, there lies an appeal to common ſenſe and experience. Our Saviour, indeed, by uſing this maxim, has approved it; and he could not appeal to the judgment of all men in this caſe, without at the ſame time declaring his own.

As obſervations of this kind depend on a great number of facts; ſo are there in the preſent caſe a great number to ſupport it. The many kingdoms and countries weaken'd or ruin'd by inteſtine diviſions, are ſo many proofs upon record of the truth of this aſſertion. And did we of this country want to have this truth cleared by ſuch inſtances, it would be but reaſonable to produce the proofs. But we have examples of our own growth, and ſtand in need of no aſſiſtance from foreign hiſtory. This iſland has often changed its inhabitants; but the new ones never got poſſeſſion, till the old ones made way for them, by their mutual hatred and animoſities; and the nation has, under very unpromiſing circumſtances, maintained itſelf againſt foreign enemies, whenever it was ſo happy as to preſerve peace and tranquillity at home.

The

The late unhappy times of Charles the Firſt were attended with this, almoſt peculiar, felicity, that no foreign nation was at leiſure to take advantage of our diviſions. Europe was in arms; and the great powers too much in awe of each other, for any one to conceive hopes of ſucceſs, had his ambition inclined him to lay hold of the opportunities, which our diſtractions offered. But tho' there was no enemy to ruin us, yet ruined we were. Such is the malignity of inteſtine diviſion!

When national quarrels grow extreme, and appear in arms, it is eaſy to foreſee the ſad conſequences; and the coldeſt imagination may be able to paint to itſelf the miſeries that muſt follow. And whoever looks back upon the many years of diſtreſs, under which this country laboured in the late times; let him view them with impartial, or with partial eye, will ſee enough to convince his judgment, how fatal a thing it is, for a kingdom to be divided againſt itſelf. It will therefore be of little uſe to enlarge on this part of the argument; and I the more willingly paſs it over, as it will ſave you and me the pain of viewing various ſcenes of woe, which that time, fruitful in miſery, would preſent before us.

But there are other evils, leſs diſcernible, which ſpring from the ſame bitter root, and naturally prepare the way for the greater miſchiefs to follow after: they are the firſt ſymptoms of public confuſion, and as they influence greatly the virtue and morality of a nation, they are in a more eſpecial manner the preacher's care.

National diviſions are ſometimes founded in material differences, ſuch as affect the well-being and conſtitution of a government; and ſometimes owe their riſe to accidents, and trifles unworthy of the concern of the public. In this reſpect therefore every caſe muſt ſtand on its own bottom, and is

ſubject to no general obſervation. But all diviſions, how different ſoever in their commencement, grow in their progreſs to be ſo much alike; partly from the common depravity of men, who have not virtue enough to act honeſtly in an honeſt cauſe; partly from the cunning of deſigning men, who ſeldom want the art to direct the public diſpute to the ſervice of their private views; that there are evil effects, which may be generally aſcribed to all diviſions, as the fruit which they naturally produce.

1. The zeal and warmth, which attend public quarrels, are apt to get poſſeſſion of men's minds and affections ſo far, as to render them in great meaſure unable to form a right judgment of things and perſons.

Without a right judgment in theſe reſpects, 'tis impoſſible for men to be of any ſervice to their country. For a foundation for public good can never be laid in a wrong judgment of things and perſons. And yet, when contentions run high, ſo hard is it, even for the cooleſt heads, to form right judgments, that it is hardly poſſible for them to get right information in any thing: the very language of the country is perverted by the zeal of parties; honour and honeſty are words which loſe their natural meaning, and become merely relative to the notions of him who uſes them; and when a perſon is repreſented to us under theſe fair and engaging characters, nothing can be certainly concluded, but that the man ſo highly praiſed, and his orator, are both of a ſide.

With as little juſtice are terms of reproach dealt about, tho' commonly with a more liberal hand, as the reſentments of anger and contempt are uſually keener and more active, than thoſe of love and eſteem. Men of diſcernment on all ſides ſee the folly and iniquity of this practice, yet they carry

on

on the work, without giving credit to themſelves, for the ſake of the multitude, who are greatly influenced, and often prepared for miſchief by theſe devices. If we look into the large liſt of malignants, delinquents, and perſons ſuſpected, or, perhaps without ſuſpicion, charged as Papiſts, in the late times, we ſhall find among them ſome of the wiſeſt and beſt of the nation; who, could they have had the influence in publick affairs, which their worth and merit entitled them to, would have ſaved both their king and their country from oppreſſion. But theſe men were made uſeleſs: and in like circumſtances the beſt men will always be ſo; for it muſt ever be their choice rather to ſink under ſuch artifices, than to thrive by the uſe of them; and the times leave them no other choice.

As it is with perſons, ſo it is with things. To ſee how obſtinately and perverſely men approve or diſapprove almoſt every thing by the vitiated taſte of party, one would think that truth and reaſon had left the world, or that men were univerſally fallen blind. But neither have truth and reaſon left the world, nor are men, otherwiſe than wilfully, blind. But when the appeal is made, as in popular caſes it is to the multitude, the leaders find it much eaſier to direct their paſſions, than their underſtandings. And what reaſon is there to expect, that men ſhould take the direction of their own eyes, when they refer themſelves to the opinion and approbation of thoſe, who have none?

This blind attachment to things and perſons tends gradually to deſtroy the very notions of right and wrong, and to render virtue and common honeſty of little or no ſignificancy in public affairs. The lower part of the world ſoon grows to be inſenſible of the difference; and by a habit of following a falſe rule of judging, they become incapable of making uſe of the true one. And when deſigning

men obſerve, that by doing right they cannot pleaſe their adverſaries, by doing wrong they cannot offend their friends, they will ſoon diſregard a diſtinction, of ſo little uſe either to their intereſt or reputation. And hence proceeds that hardneſs of mind, which no reaſon, no conviction can ſubdue.

How fatal an influence this muſt have upon the virtue and morality of any people, will appear by following this evil a few ſteps further into ſome of its natural and obvious conſequences.

2. One great guard to virtue, and placed in the minds of men by the hand that formed them, is the ſenſe of ſhame when we do ill: of the ſame kind, and a twin of the ſame birth, is the pleaſure ariſing from the praiſe of having done well. When men thro' the corruptneſs of their own hearts, get rid of theſe natural impreſſions, they are, in the opinion of the world, profligate and abandoned. Of this kind the inſtances are but few. But then to make theſe natural paſſions of any ſervice to us, they muſt be kept true to their proper objects, good and evil; and whenever the judgment is ſo corrupted as to loſe ſight of this difference, the love of praiſe, and the fear of ſhame will become not merely uſeleſs, but miſchievous and deſtructive. And this muſt be the caſe, whenever a falſe ſtandard of reputation is ſet up. And when a nation or kingdom is divided, honour and reputation will be dealt out by a falſe meaſure, and fall to their ſhare, who are beſt able, or moſt forward to ſerve and promote the meaſures of the intemperate zeal, which poſſeſſes the one or the other part of the diviſion. Thus true honour and virtue are robbed of their natural forces; and the ſenſe of ſhame and of praiſe are ſeduced into the ſervice of a faction; and ſo far perverted, as oftentimes to prove motives to actions baſe and diſhonourable.

3.

3. When praiſe and reproaches are diſtributed with ſo little juſtice, it has another very ill effect in hardening men againſt reproach even when they deſerve it moſt. Reproach, when it falls indiſcriminately on the beſt and the worſt, loſes its proper effect; and bad men will take advantage of the ill judgment of the world in abuſing the beſt, to deſpiſe all cenſure, how juſtly ſoever paſſed on themſelves. This will by degrees make men inſenſible of the pleaſure of doing brave and generous actions for the good of their country; they will grow ſteeled and obdurate in their minds, and with a profligate contempt of the opinion of the world, enter calmly and without remorſe into any miſchief, to which intereſt, revenge, or any other mean paſſion ſhall invite them,

4. It is a farther aggravation of this evil, to conſider, that this infamous conduct ſeldom fails of being ſucceſsful. When the malignity of inteſtine diviſion is far ſpread, it becomes a ſhelter for all iniquity. Party-zeal uſurps the place of Chriſtian charity, and covers a multitude of ſins. And when once men find that there is ſo ſhort a way to credit and eſteem, they will be tempted through lazineſs, and a natural depravity, which will be ever ready to lay hold on ſuch encouragements, to decline the honourable and laborious methods of riſing to reputation in the world, and to truſt their hopes and their fortunes to the merit of their zeal; which hopes ſeldom fail them. For,

5. As credit and reputation, the natural rewards of virtue, are perverted and miſapplied by the blind ſpirit of diviſion; ſo are the rewards which the public has provided and deſtined to the encouragement of true merit, diverted into a wrong channel: the worthieſt are often driven into obſcurity, and others called into employments and preferments,

ments, in which they can do themselves no honour, their country no service.

There is not a place in church or state of so mean a consideration, but that the public has an interest in having it supplied by a proper, and, in proportion to the duty of the office, an able man. When this is the case, the work of government is carried on regularly and steadily, and the influences of it are duly communicated, and felt in every part. As the blood, which moves from the heart, cherishes and warms the extreme parts of the body, as long as the little vessels which convey it are in due order: but if these small channels are obstructed, or lose their proper tone, coldness and numbness will ensue, and sometimes greater evils, not to be borne, nor to be cured but by the loss of a limb.

These are the steps by which division corrupts the manners and morality of a nation. And what hopes are there of seeing a people grow great and considerable, who have lost not only the sense of virtue, but even the sense of shame; who call evil good, and good evil; and are prepared to sacrifice their reason, their true interest, the peace and prosperity of their country, to their own and their leaders resentments? Can it be expected that men should form themselves by a virtuous and laborious course of life for the service of a country, where real worth and merit are so far out of consideration, that the affections and regards of the people are tied, like the favour of the Roman Circus, to the colour of the coat which distinguishes their faction.

These general observations, which I have laid before you, might be justified by numberless instances, drawn from the history of the late times: but perhaps they may weigh more standing single by themselves, than being coupled with facts, in which the

the passions of the present age are not unconcerned. And sufficient they are of themselves to warn all honest men how they begin or foment the divisions of their country.

But yet, to do justice to my subject, and the solemn occasion of this day, it is necessary to take one step into the history of former times, and to view the works of division in its utmost rage.

I am sensible how difficult it is to speak of any thing relating to that unhappy time which this day calls to mind; and how hardly truth can be borne on any side: yet shall not this discourage me from bearing my testimony against the unnatural and barbarous treason of this day, and the acts of violence, which prepared the way for it: a treason long since condemned by the public voice of the nation, in the most solemn acts of church and state.

I shall go on therefore to illustrate my subject by some examples, which the history of the late times affords, and which will reach to the full extent of the observation of my text, that "a king-"dom divided against itself cannot stand."

To put a stop to innovations, to correct the errors or abuses in government, to redress the grievances of the people by the known rules of parliament, is the true and ancient method of preserving the constitution, and transmitting it safe with all its advantages to posterity. But when this wholesome physic came to be administer'd, as at length it did, by the spirit of faction and division, it was so intemperately given, that the remedy inflamed the distemper; and the unhappy contest, which began about the rights of the king, and the liberties of the people, ended fatally in the destruction of both.

The contest about civil rights was render'd exceeding hot and fierce, by having all the disputes and quarrels in religious matters, under which the

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nation had long suffered, incorporated with it. By this means conscience was called in to animate and inflame the popular resentments. The effect was soon felt: the church of England, which had long been the glory and the bulwark of the reformation, fell the first sacrifice; and many who had served long and faithfully at her altars, were driven out to seek their bread in desolate places. What came in the room of the church so destroy'd, time would fail me should I pretend to recount; so many and so various were the forms of religion, which arose out of the imaginations of men set free from government.

The bishops of those days were generally inclined to save and support the crown. The consequence drawn from thence was, that episcopacy itself was an usurpation. My meaning is not, that this argument was ever used in the form of logick, to convince any man's judgment; but it influenced the affections of thousands, and prevailed so far as to exclude the bishops, not only from this house, where they had sat from the earliest foundation of the monarchy; but from their churches also, where they been received and reverenced as rulers and governors, for as many ages as can be counted from the days of the apostles.

But why do I mention the exclusion of the bishops from the house of lords, when so much more fatal a blow was given to the liberties and constitution of England, by declaring the house of lords itself to be useless, and excluding the peerage from a share in the legislature; a right derived to them thro' a long series of ancestors, from time immemorial.

The nobility were not free from the infection of those times; yet, to their honour be it remember'd, that the execrable fact of this day could not be carried into execution, so long as the peer-

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age of England had any influence in the government. But when once they were removed, and this laſt ſupport of the ſinking crown taken away, the crown, and the head that wore it, fell a victim to the rage of deſperate and mercileſs men.

It is ſaid, and the partiality I have for the honour of my country makes me willingly repeat it; that few, very few in compariſon, were wicked enough, and bold enough to dip their hands in royal blood. But then; how fatal to kingdoms is the ſpirit of faction and diviſion, which could in the courſe of a few years throw all the powers of the kingdom into the hands of a few deſperate men; and enable them to trample under foot the crowns and the heads of princes, the rights and honours of the antient nobility, the liberties and properties of a free people, and to tear up the very foundations of our once happy and envied conſtitution!

Could theſe acts of violence, and the cauſes which produced them, be ſuffered to lie quiet in hiſtory, as ſo many marks to point out to us the rocks and ſhelves on which our fathers made ſhipwreck, we their ſons might be the wiſer and the better for their calamities. But if we permit their paſſions and reſentments to deſcend on us; if we keep the old quarrels alive by mutual reproaches and invectives, what elſe are we doing, but nurſing up the embers of that fire which once conſumed theſe kingdoms, and which may again burſt out into a deſtroying flame? But I forbear; and will forbode no evil to my country.

The application of what has been ſaid is ſo natural and obvious, that were it pardonable to omit it on this occaſion, I ſhould hardly mention it.

There is no pleaſure in viewing the follies and diſtractions of former times; nor is there any advantage, unleſs it is in order to grow better and wiſer

wiſer by examples which hiſtory ſets before us. In the preſent caſe we have the experience, which coſt the nation dear, to warn both rulers and ſubjects, how carefully they ſhould avoid all occaſions of diviſion. The true way to do it, is for each ſide to maintain its own rights, without encroaching on thoſe of the other: for the conſtitution muſt ſuffer, whenever the rights of the crown, or the liberties of the people are invaded. And tho' every Briton is to be commended if he is fond, and may be indulged, when he is overfond (if ſuch a caſe can be) of the liberties of his country; yet he ought always to remember, that as the people have their liberties, ſo the king has his rights, which are derived from the ſame conſtitution, and the ſame law, under which the people claim their liberties: and indeed, the people have an intereſt and inheritance in the rights of the crown, which are ſo many truſts lodged in the hands of the prince for the defence and protection of the people, and to enable him the better to carry on the neceſſary works of government.

To conclude: as we have a prince on the throne, under whoſe government, tho' ſome have complained, yet none have ſuffered, in the leaſt of their rights, by any act of power; who has ſhewn himſelf not only careful, but even jealous for the liberties of his people: let us in return yield him that ſhare in our hearts and affections, which is ſo juſtly due to him; and is a recompence, the eaſieſt for good ſubjects to pay, and yet the moſt valuable that a good prince can receive.

Diſc. CXXXIII. Bp. *Secker.*

Preached on the 29th of May.

Pſalm cvi. 12, 13.

Then believed they his words, they ſang his praiſe: they ſoon forgat his works, they waited not for his counſel.

THE ſame wiſe and good being, who hath fitted the whole frame of this world to the various wants of his creatures, hath fitted the events of things to our reformation and moral improvement. Were they to be conſidered as events only, it would be folly not to learn from them: but as they are leſſons intended by heaven for our inſtruction, it is impiety alſo. Such diſpenſations of providence as we are intereſted leaſt in, may teach us a great deal by analogy, both concerning the conſequences of our behaviour, and the temper of our hearts: for we ſeldom apprehend how fatally we are capable of erring, till we ſee how other perſons have acted before us, and what hath followed. But thoſe events of former times, which extend their conſequences down to us, as they naturally excite a greater attention, ſo they generally reward it with more plentiful and more important matter of obſervation: and if we will not be made wiſe by the experience of our predeceſſors; the only doubt is, whether poſſibly our own may not teach us too late.

The two great methods of providential inſtruction are by mercies and puniſhments. Undoubtedly

ly our maker would always prefer the firſt; if it were not that enjoying them for ſome time, without interruption, tempts us unaccountably to overlook both his goodneſs, and our own duty ariſing from it. Sometimes indeed they who forget God in their proſperity, are moved by their afflictions only to murmur againſt him: but for the moſt part ſufferings have a better effect; recall to our minds both our condition and our conduct. And it might be hoped, that the very deep impreſſions, which divine judgments make, would naturally be laſting; and generations to come, "hear "and fear and do no more wickedneſs." At leaſt it might be hoped, that when forgiveneſs had ſucceeded chaſtiſement, the united force of terror and gratitude would be perpetual. To recollect our paſt deliverances, and dwell upon the thoughts of our preſent happineſs, appears too pleaſing an employment to grow weariſome. Conſidering both as evidences of God's delight to do us good, muſt ſurely heighten our reliſh of them: and preſerving in memory our obligation to a proper return, beſides its being natural to ingenuous minds, one ſhould imagine, would be ſufficiently recommended to us, by our knowing, that the continuance of our bleſſings depends on this condition.

But mankind are ſtrangely different in fact from what ſpeculation may repreſent them. Be the advantages of their condition ever ſo great, many will attend only to its inconvenience; and ſeem as if they had rather be miſerable, than not be ungrateful. Others are too intent on the enjoyment of their felicity, ever to think whom they owe it to; or think too much of the viſible means, to remember the inviſible author. And unhappily, they who have the livelieſt ſenſe of the goodneſs of God, ſeldom retain it long: "they ſing his praiſe, and ſoon "forget his works." Deliverances received perſonally

nally by ourſelves wear out of our minds in a mighty little time: but mercies derived to us from a former age, though continuing to ſubſiſt in full force, though perhaps improved, affect us no otherwiſe than the bleſſing of conſtant health doth; which tempts many to be irregular, for one whom it makes thankful. Then to compleat the unhappineſs, ſome who preſerve the moſt laſting memory of divine favours, remember them often partially and to bad purpoſes, deduce from them wrong concluſions, and are led by them into unjuſtifiable behaviour. Though they do not "forget his works, "they wait not for his counſel;" but inconſiderately follow their own imaginations: or if inſtruction forces itſelf upon them, "they will not abide it;" nor bear to be reſtrained, even by the voice of heaven.

Now the obvious method of ſecuring events of importance both from oblivion and miſconſtruction, is by appointing ſtated and ſolemn commemorations of them. God himſelf hath done this, to preſerve a juſt ſenſe of his works of creation and redemption: but the celebration of his providential goodneſs he hath left, as it was natural, to human care. And ſerious care ought to be taken; as on the one hand, that inſtitutions of this kind be neither debaſed to low occaſions, nor perverted to ill uſes; ſo on the other, that "they whom the "Lord hath redeemed and delivered from the "hand of the enemy, may offer unto him the ſacri-"fice of thankſgiving, and tell out his works with "gladneſs; exalt him in the congegation of the "people, and praiſe him in the ſeat of the elders."

This is the duty we are now aſſembled to perform: and the two things requiſite to perform it as we ought, are,

I. To conſider the nature of the bleſſing we commemorate.

II. The behaviour it directs us to.

I. In ſpeaking of the bleſſings on this day reſtored to us, the preceding evils muſt unavoidably be mentioned: and all perſons ought to bear with the mention of what all contributed to, and ſhared in. To whom the chief load of guilt was imputable, the public voice hath moſt juſtly declared: but every order of men was blameable, and every order puniſhed. Firſt, an over-warm zeal for it muſt be acknowledged was ſhewn in the church, againſt a very provoking ſect of zealots: and illegal powers were exerciſed, to a dangerous degree, in the ſtate; when the bounds of legal power were leſs clearly fixed. Then fears and reſentments carried good men too far; and gave bad men an opportunity of leading them inſenſibly farther ſtill, by very wicked arts: till they were neither ſure of retreating with ſafety, nor yet could go forward without great guilt. Conceſſions were made them, in ſome caſes too large; in moſt, if not all, very ſufficient. But theſe came too late. The minds of men were exaſperated, and confidence in each other loſt: ſo that, inſtead of reconciling, they only gave ground of advantage for building farther demands upon, which the makers of them well knew could not be complied with. Inſiſting however that they ſhould, from diſcontents they broke out into tumults; and tumults ſoon heighten'd into open rebellion. To have lived in "theſe beginnings of ſorrows" muſt have been very dreadful: but how much more when diſcord had brought forth its perfect work; had involved the three nations in bloodſhed, and the numberleſs diſtreſſes that belong to civil wars. After infinite ſacrilege and devaſtation, committed under colour of religion and freedom, war indeed ceaſed for a time: but the fruits of war continued. The primitive form of our eccleſiaſtical government was illegally

gally aboliſhed: the univerſities, the clergy, the body of the people moſt cruelly oppreſſed: till one part of the conquerors attempting to extend their oppreſſion over the reſt, they took a deſperate reſolution, which they perſuaded each other heaven had inſpired them with, to eſtabliſh themſelves by overturning the whole. Then the majeſty of the crown, the honours of the nobility, the privileges of the commons, fell a promiſcuous ſacrifice, as the church had done before, to enthuſiaſtic fury. Freſh commotions and a new effuſion of blood attended this cataſtrophe. The ſubverters of lawful authority by force, underwent repeated ſubverſions of their own by one another: the patrons of unbounded liberty, ſunk under the dominion of abſolute tyranny: the aſſerters of an imaginary purity in religion, promoted its being defiled with pernicious corruptions: and, by a moſt inſtructive ſeverity of providence, all in their turns were made to "eat of the fruit of their own way, and "were filled with their own devices," to ſo ſurprizing a degree of exactneſs; that there was not perhaps any one ill thing, which either ſide did, but the juſtice of God returned it viſibly upon them.

Such was the ſtate of our anceſtors for many years: groaning under their preſent evils, and "their "hearts failing them for fear, and for looking af-"ter thoſe things which were coming on the earth." But moſt unexpectedly, when all attempts for reſtoring our government and laws had proved ineffectual; when the few defenders of them remaining had neither ſtrength of their own, nor hope of aſſiſtance from abroad; when their oppoſers had all the power of the nation in their hands; and, however divided amongſt themſelves, were engaged by principle and intereſt, by fear and hatred, to ſupport their common cauſe: then

did God "bow the heart of this people, even as "the heart of one man," to recall their exiled ſovereign, and re-eſtabliſh their ancient conſtitution in church and ſtate. "The merciful and gracious "Lord hath ſo done his marvellous works, that "they ought to be had in remembrance. Praiſed "be the Lord daily: even the God who helpeth "us, and poureth his benefits upon us."

But great as this deliverance was; yet every fibre of ſuch a root of bitterneſs could not be extirpated immediately: and a new evil ſprung up from it, which once more threatned us with ruin. Our princes, deprived in their tender years of the inſtruction and example of their royal father, baniſhed into the midſt of temptation, and ſeeing and feeling the terrible effects of a pretended or miſguided zeal for our liberties and religion; returned to us with diſpoſitions unfavourable to both. Theſe, in the reign of the younger of them, had reduced us to the very extremity of danger; when the mercy of providence, again interpoſing, delivered us; and not only completed, but we hope hath ſecured to us forever, the whole bleſſing of the reſtoration, under our preſent happy eſtabliſhment. Our ſovereign, we are ſure, hath the ſincereſt regard both to our civil and religious rights: his poſterity have deeply imbibed the ſame generous principle: and all we can have to fear, muſt be from ourſelves.

II. Let us therefore proceed to conſider, what behaviour the great event we commemorate, directs us to: what is the counſel, which God hath given us by it.

The greateſt part of the inſtruction indeed muſt ariſe from our ſufferings: but the whole power of making advantage of it, ariſes from our deliverance. And our ſufferings being cauſed by mutual vehemence, and our deliverance being effected in peace:

in peace: both may well diſpoſe us to a mild conſideration of what they teach. To make invectives now, againſt perſons who are gone long ago to anſwer for their ſins before God, can be of little benefit: and to charge others raſhly with inheriting their faults, may be great injuſtice: beſides that generoſity ſhould reſtrain one ſide from bitterneſs; and decency, the other. Undoubtedly caution, to prevent the repetition of paſt evils, is highly requiſite. But where ſo large a proportion of them was brought about by ſuch as meant it not, the moſt needful caution is, that we each of us avoid falling into the ſame error: that we recollect, whatever our ſtation or profeſſion be, not only the injuries, which our predeceſſors in the ſame underwent, but chiefly thoſe they did; and apply our knowledge of former times, not to exaſperate others, but to amend or warn ourſelves. This is the uſe, which ought to be made of the plaineſt parts of the hiſtory: and much more ſhould we take care, not to grow warm about the doubtful ones: but allowing men to differ from us, as they may very innocently, concerning the characters and conduct of perſons and parties formerly, endeavour all to agree in the one material point, our own conduct now. And ſurely the period of time before our view, ſuggeſts very plainly moſt important directions to every ſort of perſons amongſt us.

It muſt remind the governors of the eſtabliſhed church, that rigorous treatment of ſuch as diſſent from it, and endeavour to extend their own authority, or influence, beyond reaſonable bounds, are methods as contrary to prudence, as they are to religion: that neither learning, nor piety, nor eminence in other virtues, will be able to ſupport them, without a ſuitable degree of humility and forbearance; but that care to be inoffenſive and diligence to be uſeful, are their true ſtrength. And

at the ſame time, they who are prejudiced againſt the eſtabliſhed church ought to remember, that its ruin was attended with that of the whole conſtitution: that there followed in its place, firſt another church-power, allowed to be much more terrible; then all manner of confuſion: and this continued, till providence re-eſtabliſhed us on the old foundation. So that even in thoſe times their ſchemes were far from producing any good: and it cannot be fitting to revive them now; when, God be thanked, there never was ſo little of the bad ſpirit, which they pretend to fear. We do not deſire to oppreſs: we do not deſire to be formidable. We only deſire protection and ſupport in ſerving the cauſe of religion and virtue: and it is a very unkind and diſcouraging return made us, for avoiding the faults imputed to our predeceſſors; if ſome will not ſee it, and others will give us no proof of their ſeeing it.

From the occurrences of the ſame times, counſellors of princes ought to learn, that the great intereſt of the ſovereign and their own is, never to bear hard upon the liberties of their people; for they will reſtore themſelves with dangerous force: never to give them jealouſy; for too often ſcarce any thing will remove it: never to deſpiſe even their leſs reaſonable complaints; but, as far as it is poſſible, always promote the public good by methods agreeable to the public inclination. And the ſeveral parts of the legiſlature ſhould learn, each to maintain their own privileges with calm reſolution; but to abſtain religiouſly from mutual incroachments: for not only the ſacred obligation of juſtice requires it; but experience hath ſhewn, that when once the inward balance of a conſtitution is broken, endleſs diſorders are likely to follow: and no part of the whole is in danger of ſuffering more, than that which at firſt appeared to be the gainer.

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But beſides the ſeparate admonitions, given by the hiſtory of this day to particular ſorts of perſons; the inſtruction, which it offers to us all in common, deſerves our ſerious attention.

Much of the miſery theſe nations underwent, was owing to that unhappy proneneſs, which there is in mankind, both to magnify the real inconveniencies of their condition, and add imaginary ones to them: and their own ill conduct is always the laſt thing they charge them upon; that of their ſuperiors, uſually the firſt. For theſe inconveniences, they flatter themſelves in the next place, there muſt be ſome remedy: and then, whatever ſcheme for reformation either their own imagination preſents, or any body elſe ſuggeſts, they embrace it immediately, run haſtily away with it, and ſoon grow too vehement, ever to conſider, whether it be not impracticable or ineffectual, unjuſt or pernicious. Indeed to be abſolutely againſt all changes, is either great folly, or great wickedneſs. Things may have been wrong conſtituted originally: they may have degenerated ſince: they may be attended now with different circumſtances: and alterations may not only be reaſonable to cure preſent complaints, but neceſſary to prevent worſe diſorders. But ſtill the general preſumption ſhould always be in favour of what is eſtabliſhed: and no innovations, greater than need, ought ever to be attempted. Intereſt, opinion, reſentment, warmth of temper, place different things before different perſons, in very ſtrong lights: too ſtrong perhaps to ſee them diſtinctly; at leaſt, to obſerve every thing connected with them. Theſe views however they act boldly upon, heat one another, ſometimes by concurrence, ſometimes by oppoſition: doubt nothing in themſelves, ſuſpect nothing in thoſe that act with them, pardon nothing in thoſe that differ from them: deſtroy the quiet of numbers who have not deſerved it, as well

as their own: and all to do miſchief, it may be, inſtead of good; even though they intend good. For not only ſchemes, that look plauſible to ſuch perſons, may be very hurtful notwithſtanding; perhaps to themſelves, perhaps to others, who have an equal right to be conſidered: but ſuppoſing them innocent, ſuppoſing them beneficial; yet attempting them raſhly, may do unknown harm, ſhould they miſcarry; and coſt infinitely too dear, ſhould they ſucceed. If a nation is to be put into a ferment for them; and the multitude called in, to be vehement about matters, of which they are no judges: this in itſelf is a dreadful evil; and may poſſibly riſe to a deſtructive height. For in ſome circumſtances it is much eaſier to inflame perſons, than to foreſee when they will cool: and there is one point of yet greater importance than reforming faults; preſerving reverence to authority. If this be once loſt, poſſibly a blameleſs conduct of affairs, which yet no body can ever promiſe, may not reſtore it: and unleſs it be reſtored, every thing will be levelled. Sooner or latter indeed, God knows how long it may be firſt, ſome ſort of order muſt return: but, without the peculiar interpoſition of a kind providence, the beautiful order of a free government will not. And it ought to be well thought of, that perſons who begin with moderate and moſt laudable intentions, may forget themſelves, may be entangled with others, may be led or driven into doing what they greatly diſapprove; or may loſe all power of ſtopping miſchief, when it is once ſet to work; and have nothing left, but to periſh with the ſhip in the ſtorm they have helped to raiſe. Theſe dangers indeed cannot be reaſons for complying with every thing: for in vain will heaven have reſtored to us our happy form of government, if we ſuffer it to be a form only. But they are powerful reaſons for thinking coolly what

deſerves

deſerves oppoſition, and oppoſing it with temper: for conſidering who are the perſons really to blame, in what degree upon the whole they are ſo, and how difficult it is not to be ſo: for redreſſing grievances by no other than regular methods; and waiting for opportunities, not forcing them: for examining faithfully the purity of our own intentions; for aſking ourſelves often, how far we mean to go; and obſerving carefully what thoſe perſons aim at, with whom we are engaged: for weighing well what remedies the public conſtitution will bear, what it will be likely to ſink under; and ſeriouſly recollecting, how great multitudes have their fate involved in that of the whole. There can be no cautions more evidently juſt than theſe; though we had not had experience to teach us ſo awefully, that for want of regarding them in the times now before us, no one ſcheme ended as it was deſigned at firſt. Every thing was propoſed to be reformed into perfection: every thing, inſtead of that, was compleatly brought to ruin: and happy did men think themſelves, with very good cauſe, when at laſt they were able to get back into the ſituation, which they had imagined before to be ſo intolerable. "Now all theſe things "happened unto them for enſamples: and they "are written for our admonition."

Nor let it be replied, that though the bold attempts for reformation and liberty miſcarried then, they may ſucceed another time. Let us rather reflect, that though the confuſion and ſlavery which they introduced, proved but temporary then, the next trial may perpetuate them. Liberty is a bleſſing of ſuch unſpeakable value, that no wonder if the very name of it be dear to men: but the name miſapplied was fatal to our forefathers; and may be ſo to us. Licentiouſneſs of ſpeech and writing, a favourite and moſt entertaining ſpecies of liberty to the

the inconſiderate, had the effects amongſt them, which it muſt have every where: not only of injuring particular perſons in the moſt ſenſible manner; but of deſtroying that regard to ſtations and offices, ranks and orders of men, which muſt be preſerved, or ſociety muſt be diſſolved. For when once contending parties, by their mutual accuſations and aſperſions, have taught the people to think ill, or meanly, of all perſons that are, or can be their governors; what remains for them, but to think in the ſame manner of government itſelf, and treat it accordingly? There may indeed perhaps be no effectual method of reſtraining theſe enormities by law, conſidering how artfully men have learnt to diſguiſe them, without very great danger of hurtful conſequences from the reſtraint. But to take this advantage for being guilty of them, is a moſt ungenerous uſe of freedom againſt ſuch as wiſh it well; and a moſt unwiſe one, againſt ſuch as do not. All good men therefore ſhould labour unanimouſly to keep down this bad ſpirit, each on his own ſide; for in vain do we exclaim againſt what we indulge: and to diſcountenance it ſo ſtrongly by expreſſing their private abhorrence of it, that there may be no reaſon, and no pretence, if poſſible, for a public proviſion againſt it. Liberty cannot be ſupported, any more than power, but by exerciſing it with moderation. And they that overturn either, by carrying it to extravagant heights, after ſuch warning as providence hath given us, and ſuch opportunity of profiting by that warning, muſt neither expect any remedy, nor much pity.

But indeed there are perſons who ſeem almoſt to think, that liberty cannot be extended too far: that every diminution of authority is ſo much gain, every increaſe of it ſo much loſs, to the community. Now if this be true, laws and government are a public nuſance. And if not, men ought to conſider,

ſider, what reſtraints are requiſite, as well as what may be abuſed; and remember, that a right to do things neceſſary to be done, muſt be veſted ſomewhere, and muſt be exerted. Authority indeed is of a growing nature: but ſo is averſion to authority: and freedom unreſtrained is power unreſtrained. No tyrannies have been more inſupportable, than thoſe of the multitude: nor can any perſons be more juſtly dreaded, than they who declaim for liberty, in the ſpirit of perſecution; and demand it with inſolence, in the midſt of the enjoyment of it. Such behaviour plainly ſhews, that not content with being free, they want to rule: and ſince they cannot plead, that any harſh treatment hath provoked them to theſe outrages; they are ſo far leſs excuſable, than ſome of their predeceſſors in the times of our troubles.

But however ſtrongly we are cautioned againſt licentiouſneſs, by the ſufferings of former days; there hath ariſen notwithſtanding in our own, one very ſhocking kind of it, almoſt peculiar to this nation: that of publickly treating religion with contempt; and after magnifying morals merely in oppoſition to it, explaining them away to juſt nothing. Setting the world at large in theſe reſpects, appears to be a principal point, which ſome have at heart: whoſe character in ſcripture might ſurely have given a more general ſuſpicion of them, than it hath: that "while they promiſe others liberty, "they are themſelves the ſervants of corruption." And too many, who have no deſign of contributing to the progreſs of irreligion, ſee it however with great tranquility. Let men think, let men act, juſt as they will, provided they are not bigots, but perſons of free principles; the public is ſafe, and all is well. But is it ſafe they ſhould be bigots to atheiſm, bigots to profligateneſs? Or can it be a matter of indifference, whether they have a good

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and right rule of conduct, though it were with ſome miſtakes; or whether they have none at all, or a quite wrong one? We own, that falſe notions about religion were one great cauſe of the ſufferings of this nation. But ſo were falſe notions about freedom another. And why are miſtakes, or even wilful abuſes, a reaſon for the former to be trampled upon, when they are not thought a reaſon againſt exalting the latter without bounds? We own that ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm ought to be guarded againſt: and that this is a moſt important leſſon of providence to us, on this day. But it cannot be right to guard againſt them, by rooting out of mens minds the reverence due to the author of nature; or by taking methods, which, in the natural courſe of things, will bring one or both of them back upon us, as perhaps we have begun to experience: or at leaſt will bring evils, not leſs formidable. Public happineſs cannot ſubſiſt, without ſocial virtue and moral ſelf-government: nor can either of theſe ſubſiſt, without regard to God. Nothing, but the thought of his ſeeing and rewarding, can poſſibly have force ſufficient, in all caſes, to reſtrain mens paſſions, to counter-balance their preſent intereſts; to excite the indolent, keep the enterpriſing within due bounds, and unite all in making the common good their common end.

We ſhall therefore neglect the moſt important of the counſels of providence on this day, if we learn not, from ſo inſtructive a diſpenſation of it, that juſt ſenſe of our duty to the governor and lawgiver of the world, which if our forefathers had preſerved, theſe miſeries had never happened; and if we preſerve, they will never happen more. For as, on the one hand, religion enforces powerfully that neceſſary caution, expreſſed by the prophet Ezra; "ſeeing thou our God haſt puniſhed us leſs than "our iniquities deſerve, and haſt given us ſuch de-

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" liverance as this; ſhould we again break thy " commandments, wouldſt thou not be angry with " us, till thou hadſt conſumed us?" So on the other, it ſupports us with that noble confidence, expreſſed by the prophet Samuel: " fear not: but " ſerve the Lord with all your heart: for the Lord " will not forſake his people, for his great name's " ſake. Only fear the Lord and ſerve him in " truth: for conſider how great things he hath " done for you."

Diſcourſe CXXXIV. Dr. *Warner.*

A FAST SERMON for the FIRE of LONDON.

John iii. 8.

But let man and beaſt be covered with ſack-cloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.—

WHEN we enlarge our thoughts beyond our own private perſons, and conſider ourſelves as parts or members of a community—in the ſupport of which much of our temporal happineſs conſiſts—we ſhall find it is as much our intereſt, to endeavour after the public ſafety and proſperity, as to ſtudy the preſervation and the health of the natural body.

We have confeſs'd that we are now aſſembled, "in the deepeſt ſenſe of God's amazing judg-"ments, and our manifold provocation, to beſeech "him not to abandon us to ourſelves;" And we are immediately to pray, that we may "look back "with ſerioufneſs upon the dreadful deſolation—of "which a ſolemn memorial is this day made—and "that he would preſerve this city from the rage of "fire, and other ſuch ſad effects of his diſplea-"ſure."

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This is the public declaration of the deſign of this ſolemnity; and if we have any regard to the intereſt, to the ſtrength, and grandeur of our city—upon which the proſperity of our country in a great meaſure depends—it concerns us moſt ſurely to apply ourſelves to the ſerious uſe of thoſe means, which are either neceſſary or expedient to make our prayers heard.

Theſe means we are directed to by the king of Nineveh in the words before us; who made this decree, that he might prevent the deſtruction which the prophet Jonah threatened, that Nineveh ſhould be overthrown.

It may therefore be very ſuitable to the occaſion of our preſent meeting, to lead you back to this, important piece of antient hiſtory; to compare it with the viſible effects of God's providence in this city; and to conclude the whole with ſome reflections that may be of great uſe to us, and of peculiar propriety to this ſolemnity.

But, in the firſt place, we are to recollect the hiſtory of God's dealing with the antient Ninevites.

The city of Nineveh, we are told, was by the bleſſing of God become the glory of the whole earth; pleaſantly ſituated upon the banks of the river Tigris; a moſt ſweet and fruitful country round about it; that it was ſuperior not only to all the cities of Aſia, but to all the cities of the world; and the capital of that firſt and moſt famous monarchy of Aſſyria. It was ſtiled by God himſelf in his commiſſion to Jonah to reform it, that great city; and in the original and the ſeptuagint, it is the great city of God. The antient geographers deſcribe it as a place of prodigious magnitude and extent; and many pompous expreſſions are made uſe of, to ſet forth the profuſion of its wealth and grandeur.

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To this account of heathen writers, the ſcripture makes an addition, that it was a city of three days journey; and howſoever we explain the expreſſion, whether it would require ſo much time to walk round about the walls, or to make a regular perambulation thro' every ſtreet, it will ſerve to ſhow that it was a place of great extent, and which abounded with all the neceſſaries and conveniences of life. To this opinion of its grandeur we ſhall be led by the ſame ſacred hiſtory, which tells us that there were more than ſixſcore thouſand perſons—meaning infants, and young children—"that could not diſ-"cern between their right-hand and their left."

But now what ſort of return did that great people make to heaven, for this amazing and diſtinguiſhed bounty?—why they were diſſipated and loſt in licentiouſneſs and pleaſure, and ungratefully abuſed the mercies, which God in ſuch an extraordinary meaſure had beſtowed upon them. Their vices indeed are not particularly deſcribed; but by what is ſaid in the hiſtory, and by the reſentment which God expreſſed againſt them, it is plain they were great and many. The decree of the king and his nobles, in the words of the text, would lead one to conclude, that they were wanting in all the duties, to God, their neighbour, and themſelves. And it is ſaid by the Lord to Jonah, in the beginning of this hiſtory, "that their wic-"kedneſs was come up before him;" they were ſo inſolent and abandoned, that without a ſpeedy reformation he could no longer withhold his judgments.

We know from the frame of the human mind—how much ſoever wealth and greatneſs may be coveted, and how neceſſary ſoever it is that they ſhould be ſomewhere placed in a community—that yet they have a tendency to corrupt the heart of man; and if we appeal to the behaviour of thoſe,

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in every age of the world, who have a bounded in them, we ſhall find- --generally ſpeaking---that amongſt them religion hath been made the ſubject of ridicule, and the moſt rational devotion deem'd a work of ſuperſtition; the moſt ſerious obligations of life have been overlook'd, and a ſenſe of God's providence thought an idle notion.

It is not therefore to be queſtion'd, but that the Ninevites were ſo elated with their diſtinguiſh'd grandeur, as to have forgotten that they were but men, and accountable for their actions to an overruling power. The ſchool of affliction is the ſchool of wiſdom; and as no calamities had overtaken them to tame the wildneſs and extravagance of the mind, no judgments of God from which they ſhould learn righteouſneſs, ſo they gave themſelves up, we find, to vile affections; to avarice and oppreſſion, to lewdneſs and intemperance, and all the train of vices, which are promoted by a ſeries of affluence and proſperity.

The citizens of Nineveh, 'tis true, were Heathens; with whom, at leaſt, the Almighty had not enter'd into any peculiar covenant of religion: but as they were originally, it is conjectur'd, of the ſeed of Abraham, ſo it is probable that they had a knowledge of the true and living God; or by their acquaintance with the Jewiſh nation, who reſorted to them on account of trade, they might know enough of religion without doubt, to know that there are ſolid comforts in obedience, and that to diſobey would be neither ſafe nor pleaſant.

But let this be as it will---the almighty left them not, it is plain, without a witneſs; the law of good and evil was written upon their hearts; and he taught them daily by his providence, and by the wiſe oeconomy and government of the world. The great book of nature lay open before them from the beginning; and from a careful attention to its

inſtructions, they might eaſily have perceiv'd their obligations to obey the dictates of natural reaſon. But natural reaſon, we may imagine, had no influence. Their affluence prompted them to profaneneſs; and the more they poſſeſs'd of the bounty of the almighty, the more their paſſions were gratify'd and inflam'd: he could no longer therefore wink at their iniquities, "their wickedneſs was "come up before him," and he ſent his prophet to aſſure them that "in forty days their city ſhould "be overthrown." A dreadful meſſage! and from thence alone we may conclude that their abominations were become intolerable. But the terror of theſe judgments, which were to overthrow their city, did not leave them, as it found them, loſt to all ſenſe of duty, and quite abandon'd to their vices; no, this providential warning which God gave them of their danger, was ſo brought home to their heart and conſcience, that it produc'd an immediate and univerſal reformation. The people of Nineveh upon this "believed God, they proclaim-"ed a faſt, and put on ſackcloth, from the great-"eſt even to the leaſt."

If it be aſk'd here how it happen'd, that the Ninevites, who were gentiles, came ſo readily to give aſſent to the prophet Jonah, who was an Hebrew, we are to remember that they have not only been ſuppos'd already to retain the knowledge of God, but that Jonah gave them alſo an extraordinary and uncommon evidence of this miſſion. This is what we may learn from our Saviour's declaration to the ſcribes and phariſees, who ſought a ſign of him from heaven, that there ſhould be none but ſuch a ſign, as was that of the prophet Jonah to the Ninevites.

Tho' a mere ſtranger therefore, and the matter of his meſſage terrible, and of the higheſt moment, againſt which their hopes, their pleaſures, and their happi-

happineſs muſt ſtrongly plead, yet the credentials of his miſſion, you ſee, were not in the leaſt rejected. The ſame infidelity, and that wiſdom of the world, which is now in faſhion, did not teach them to laugh at the oracles of God, and to make their ſport at the affirmations of heaven. Unwilling, as we may ſuppoſe them, to be forc'd from their pride and pleaſures, yet they did not treat his threatnings as the troubleſome dreams of a melancholy enthuſiaſt, or of ſome hungry prieſt who divines for a reward. The evidence which he gave of his miraculous eſcape, when the Lord ſent him to that city to denounce his vengeance, was not only a proof to them that he was ſent, but it was a convincing proof likewiſe of the "almighty power of "the God of Jonah."

Thus having taken this view of God's dealing with the people of Nineveh, as it is ſet forth unto us in this part of ſcripture, we may now proceed to compare it with the viſible effects of his divine providence in this city—conſider'd in its whole extent—and more eſpecially in the times in which we live.

And in making this compariſon we are to begin with the diſtinguiſh'd goodneſs of the Almighty to this metropolis of our land; but here, in its ſituation, in its trade and commerce, in the fruitfulneſs and the beauty of the country round it, in the ſuperiority of its grandeur, extent, and riches, to moſt other cities in the world, the parallel is ſo ſtriking as to need no enlargement. Whatever bleſſings of this kind the Ninevites had to boaſt of, it has pleas'd the divine providence to confer upon this city. For ſhould it be allow'd that it falls ſhort of the great city of Nineveh, in its walls, and buildings, and in the number of its inhabitants, yet in many other particulars it may be ſuppos'd greatly to go beyond it.

By the means of our ſituation, the fruits of the earth of every climate, the wealth and the manufacture of every other country, is in ſome meaſure made our own; and almoſt all the nations upon earth may be ſaid to contribute largely to our profit or our pleaſure. In ſhort, there's nothing neceſſary to the wants of nature, no convenient accommodation, nothing requiſite to the higheſt luxury and ambition, to private utility or to public ornament, but what is here in a profuſion that admits of no deſcription.

From this tranſient view of our happineſs as a city, let us look upon the bleſſings of another kind, more valuable in themſelves and more extenſive in their influence;---the bleſſings of a civil and religious nature.

It has pleas'd the almighty ruler in his great goodneſs to us, to fence and guard our liberties with the moſt happy government in the world; at an equal diſtance, from popular licentiouſneſs, and arbitrary power. In conſequence of this government, it may be ſaid of the enjoyment of our rights and properties, and of a relief from violence and injuſtice, that the one is as ſecure, and the other as eaſy in this city----not indeed as we could wiſh them---but conſidering our liberty, and the number of the inhabitants, as the wiſdom of man can make them, and the iniquitouſneſs of our times allows of.

But the religion and the worſhip which is here eſtabliſh'd---I pray God we may leave it to our children after us---is a bleſſing that the Ninevites were perfect ſtrangers to; and which may be the envy of every other nation under heaven. And tho' we cannot indeed affirm, that it is entirely free from thoſe defects and imperfections, to which human conſtitutions are ever liable; yet of the purity of our worſhip from the dangerous abſurdities of idolatry

idolatry and ſuperſtition, and of the toleration which is granted to thoſe who differ from it, in conformity to the moſt excellent part of our Saviour's doctrine—which is that of charity—of theſe bleſſings we may juſtly boaſt; and in this reſpect it may be ſaid, "that God hath not dealt ſo with any nation, "neither had the Ninevites ſuch a clear and exten-"ſive knowledge of his laws."

But now another part of the compariſon between us, is, the return which we have made to heaven for all this diſtinguiſhed bounty. And let the iniquities of the Ninevites be as great and numerous as we can ſuppoſe, yet they cannot exceed thoſe which we complain of; and which were moſt of them introduced at the time when that dreadful deſolation we now commemorate, was ſent as a judgment upon this city. There is no neceſſity to enter into the moral and religious character of that reign, to ſhow the principles which then prevailed, and the manners that were then in faſhion. We are ourſelves under the influence of that age of wickedneſs; and the harveſt of profligate and infidel characters that we now reap, is agreeable to the ſeed which was then ſown.

To defend atheiſm with the arguments with which it was then defended, is not indeed the mode at preſent; but ſtill it is atheiſm upon other principles: and to this it is owing, that we ſee ſuch a contempt of ſerious truth, and the ſubjects which mend the heart; that men mock at revealed religion and miracles that confirm it, and ſcoff at paſt prophecies, as antiquated ſtories, tales that never had an accompliſhment. To this it is owing, that the regulation of our paſſions is turned into the greateſt ridicule; and when offences againſt decency are quite out of the queſtion, that offences againſt heaven---howſoever daring---are ſeldom cenſured. For what can poſſibly be the meaning of the out-

rageous licentiouſneſs of the common people, and that amazing diſtraction of mind which abounds amongſt the higheſt, but that both ſorts perſuade themſelves, that there is not "a God that judgeth the earth," and that the ſcene of this world will ſome time be ſhut up in everlaſting darkneſs? But be their meaning as it may—our ſtreets are the common ſcenes of blaſphemy and profaneneſs; and we hear men of all conditions, talk as coolly and without ſhame of committing exceſs and wantonneſs, as tho' good and evil were the ſame; mere words of courſe; without any difference in nature or in conſcience; without reſpect or reference, to any rule or law, of reaſon or of God; and ſo without reward and without puniſhment.

The people of figure, who we know are call'd the better ſort, and thoſe who imitate their follies, have carry'd amuſements of every kind—no matter how abſurd or fatal—to ſuch an aſtoniſhing degree, that they are no longer now a relaxation from induſtry, and a relief from the cares of life, but they are become a perfect buſineſs, and preferr'd to duties the moſt important in a public or private ſtation. Every ſerious concern is neglected for ſuch follies, and likewiſe by the other ſex, as well as ours; and rather than purſue a character not in taſte, rather than forfeit the good opinion of others, who are idleneſs, and vanity, and profligacy itſelf, they make a ſacrifice of truth, of prudence, and religion; and, for fear of a little ill-plac'd and pointleſs raillery, become idle, vain, and profligate themſelves.

Inſtead of an attendance on the public worſhip, as examples to their families, examples to thoſe who have an eye upon their rank and ſtation, they even take no care to ſave appearances; but by an avowed neglect of divine worſhip, and the moſt licentious indecencies on the day appointed for it, they turn religion, and a regard to heaven, into a jeſt.

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To this same contempt of principle it is owing, that public spirit is so much out of fashion, and a base selfishness prevails; and that the first passes generally for enthusiasm in politicks, as piety does in religion. In a word, to this same audacious contempt of the God of heaven, it is owing that the most solemn and deliberate oaths are trifled with; that men swear to this establishment, as a qualification for places of power or profit, and yet manifest their aversion to it but too apparently in their hearts: in their hearts?——nay, some have glory'd in their shame, and with an assurance equal to their impiety, have affected to show it in their very dress. The reflection indeed is dreadful, that with all the good sense and improvement which we have to make our boast of, there never was an age, perhaps, in which religion was so professedly laugh'd at and abandon'd; when promiscuous lewdness was so much practis'd; examples in vice so public and distinguish'd; and, in short, when such an insolent and avow'd licentiousness abounded as the fashion of the times, as it is our unhappiness at this day to lament. This is a short view of the state of morals and religion now amongst us, and a very dreadful state it is;---enough surely to convince us, that we have not come short of the iniquities of the Ninevites, how great soever we may suppose them.

And this being our state with regard to God that governs the world, what do we imagine that this can end in? The Ninevites had a message by the prophet Jonah, upon the sight of such iniquities, that their city should be overthrown; and the consequence of this message was their repentance and humility. And would to God the comparison did not fail us in this particular; either that our iniquities were not so great as the iniquities of the Ninevites, or that we might hope we should be prevail'd upon as speedily to repent! but alas! our fathers sinned as

did the Ninevites; and tho' admoniſh'd by the patriarchs and prophets of antient time, by our Saviour and his apoſtles, tho' warn'd of God himſelf by the judgments of war and peſtilence, yet they did not return unto him; "but pride, oppreſſion, "and fulneſs of bread,"---as the form of our devotion for this day confeſſes-- "making this city like "the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah," at length he puniſh'd them with a vengeance anſwerable to their ſins: a mercileſs fire and a devouring flame overſpread ſuch a deſolation, that tho' the peſtilence had juſt before left its houſes in a manner without inhabitants, the remaining inhabitants were left by the fire without houſes; without houſes of prayer, as well as without houſes to dwell in; the magnificent temple---in the place of which this temple ſtands --being not excepted out of the number that were at time deſtroy'd. Our fathers ſaw this, and were afraid; they were amaz'd indeed and terrify'd at the aweful judgment; but yet it being intended as a motive of converſion, and not as an inſtrument of violence, the hearts of but few were ſoften'd.

Our ears have heard this, and they have declar'd this unto us; we have had the ſame admonitions, and the ſame light of ſcripture, "with the additional "inſtruction of this dreadful event," to bring us to repentance and a better mind; but yet our iniquities, like theirs, have gone up before God: and as our vices agree, ſo there is a ſignal agreement in the way of God's dealing with us; he hath made "bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations," and ſent his judgments one after another, that we may learn righteouſneſs from thence.

We have had a long, an expenſive, and a bloody war; we faſted and pray'd before the God of heaven for ſucceſs, and yet our forces did not always conquer; the weight of providence---and an irreſiſti ble

siſtible weight it is---was many times in the ſcale againſt us, to cure the pride of thoſe who did delight in war; and to teach us notwithſtanding our much boaſted valour, that "the heavens do rule, "and that vain is the help of man." Amongſt many other miſeries which this war occaſioned, our rights and properties, our liberty and religion, were in the utmoſt danger by a rebellion; an invader of theſe, to our amazement and our terror, was in the centre of the kingdom; and this had almoſt brought the calamities of a civil war to our very doors: we have had for a long time a contagious diſtemper among the cattle, which it is not in the power of human ſkill to put an end to: and to theſe there have been added judgments—"and very late ones, "effects of which are at this moment viſible——" of the ſame kind with that which we are now met to deprecate; reſtrained in degree indeed thro' the great mercy of God, but yet the degree very ſufficient to alarm us.—Alarmed we were once, and that prodigiouſly; I appeal to your own fears for a proof of this, and to the laudable activity which many of your exerted at that dreadful fire, which raged in the very principal and moſt important part of this trading capital. It pleaſed God, it muſt be owned, to ſpare us at that time, and to puniſh us to correction only, and not to abſolute deſolation—Happy they who were corrected by it! but we have not yet for all this hearkened unto the Lord, as the Ninevites hearkened unto Jonah; for they "turned every one immediately from his evil "way, and from the violence that was in their "hands."

We come now therefore to conclude the whole with ſome reflections that may be of great uſe to us, and of peculiar propriety to this ſolemnity: and ſhould they draw out this diſcourſe to a much greater length than is in theſe days approved of, yet this

this will be no objection to ſerious perſons—affected with the ſad occaſion of our meeting, and the melancholy proſpect of our own approaching ruin—and to others there needs no excuſe.

From the account which has been of God's dealing with the people of Nineveh, we may not only form a judgment of the behaviour which he requires of us in our preſent circumſtances, but of what we may expect from his providential adminiſtration. And indeed, it is evidently the intention of the hiſtorical part of ſcripture, that we ſhould ſo apply and underſtand it, as to make it an admonition of our own duty to God; and a ſort of impiety towards his providence not to make ſuch a moral uſe of it.

The people of Nineveh, it is ſaid, had been guilty of moſt notorious and abominable immoralities; and well it would be for us, if we could conceal a ſpirit of profaneneſs and infidelity, a ſpirit of luxury and profuſeneſs, and a remarkable decay of zeal about religion, in this great and antient city!—under ſuch circumſtances of guilt, the prophet Jonah, as we have ſeen, had an immediate commiſſion to declare from God himſelf, that the city of Nineveh ſhould ſpeedily be overthrown. This ſhows us too plainly to admit of any diſpute, that we are now in a conjuncture that ſhould awaken all our care—and the more ſo, as it is againſt the voice of faſhion—by an aweful veneration of the God of heaven, to oppoſe the torrent of levity and ungodlineſs. The prophet Jonah, 'tis true, was an immediate meſſenger from the Lord of hoſts; and we may flatter ourſelves, it may be, that our obligations to repentance are not ſo ſtrict and preſſing, as the obligations of the Ninevites, becauſe no one is now ſent immediately from heaven to warn us of the vengeance of an offended deity.

But

But have we not in reality much more than this, and are we not encompassed with a whole cloud of witnesses? We have Moses and the prophets, our blessed Lord and his apostles, the preaching of this messenger, and the example of this very people, all exhorting us to repentance, and showing the danger of our condition from the corruption of our hearts.——We have known the judgment of God in the burning of this city for the sins of our forefathers; "and within these few days we have "had events of the same dreadful sort ourselves:" the calamities of this kind, it must be owned, come thick upon us: and from the contagion among the cattle which still continues; from a spirit of gaming, which bids defiance to our laws and government, and which has possessed all ranks of people—(let it not be said, and yet, O heavens! it must be said, that men of the first rank are guilty of it to a degree of madness—which is the source of the most horrid blasphemous imprecations, and which must inevitably destroy, not their own grandeur only,—would to God that was all—but likewise the happy liberty of our country;) from the sacrifice that is daily made, of the wealth and prosperity of this deluded city, to the fashions, and the follies, and the commerce, of our enemies; from a prodigious and very terrible encrease of Popery; and from the little hope there is of a reformation in our lives---I say, from these things put together---we may conclude, that the "hand of God is stretched "out still upon us;" either to prevail with us at length to "hearken to his counsel, and to chuse "his fear;" or if not, as he is mighty to destroy as well as to save, to show that he will send yet greater, and other sorts of punishments.

How soon, alas! they may come upon us, and in what ways his wisdom will proceed to an execution, it is God himself only knows; but from our abomi-

abominable impieties, and from the many tokens of his wrath in vain inflicted upon us, we may gueſs that our deſtruction is at no great diſtance from us. It is an obſervation of Machiavel—an author not ſuſpected of being righteous overmuch---and he lays it down as a rule in foretelling the ſtate of nations, "that we cannot have a greater ſign of the "ruin of any people, than to ſee the worſhip of "God deſpiſed." I chuſe to avail myſelf of the authority of this great politician, becauſe of a ſtrange affectation of late amongſt us, of giving the preference to profane authors rather than the word of God. And if there is any weight in the authority of this conſummate ſtateſman, if there is any truth in reaſon, ſcripture, and experience, we may then expect that the Lord will in a little time "avenge "himſelf of ſuch a people as we are, and viſit us "for theſe things in his wrath."

Let us look round upon the many crying enormities of this city, and ſee, "as it has been ob-"ſerved," how faſt we ripen for deſtruction; how "religion has loſt its power upon the heart, and "things every day proceed from bad to worſe; "how magiſtracy is contemned, and dignity and "order ſunk to the common level; how opulent and "noble families are undone, our children are un-"governable, and our ſervants extravagant, idle, "and unfaithful; how the public peace is diſquiet-"ed, the repoſe of the city broken by daily rob-"beries, and murder itſelf committed frequently "in the ſtreets, almoſt under the ſeat and throne of "magiſtracy." Let theſe things be conſidered, with what has been ſaid already, and who will not dread to think, that a people thus exceedingly infatuated, without virtue and without piety, without integrity and public ſpirit, may ſoon be given up to God's righteous judgments in every public deſolation!---who does not tremble to think, that with the loſs of our liberty, our property, and religion,

ligion, we may become a province to our enemies; or even that we may be drove away from the city of our fathers, and leave it to the inheritance of them that hate us!----in ſhort, who does not dread the weight of God's diſpleaſure in ſome great event or other, againſt a people thus obdurate, and who have ſo long forgotten him, unleſs we labour ſpeedily to prevent it!

The queſtion then is----for it is to be hoped that we are in earneſt as good citizens---how it is poſſible to prevent it?---Can it be by a continuance and encreaſe of wickedneſs?---If ſo, let us go on and proſper.---Let the ſons of violence, and of riot, invent, if it be poſſible, ſome new offences againſt heaven, ſome unheard of bold impieties, "to ſecure us againſt omnipotence, and to terrify "God himſelf in his wrath. But I will anſwer, "that God is greater than man, and that none ever "hardened himſelf againſt the Lord and pro-"ſpered."----If then his vengeance is not this way to be prevented, can we turn away his anger by true repentance?----Yes, this, my brethren, will prevent it; for when God ſaw that the Ninevites forſook their abominations, "he repented of the "evil which he had ſaid he would do unto them, and "he did it not."

The neceſſity of our reformation therefore being apparent, leſt God ſhould "puniſh us yet ſeven "times more for our iniquities," let us be exhorted to a real repentance of thoſe ſins which are the moſt heinous and univerſal. But then the queſtion again occurs, how ſhall this repentance be wrought, when the judgments of God have been without effect?---Our compliance with this ſolemnity is a mere external humiliation, or at beſt the ſerioufneſs of a day: many private perſons may mourn too for this city, and for the "wickedneſs of them that dwell here-"in," and we may hope for a good effect of their

ſup-

ſupplications:---but this is not enough.---The overflowings of ungodlineſs call aloud for the example and the diligence of thoſe in power, to take away all public abominations. And under ſuch general judgments as we feel, and have reaſon yet to expect, we can never do our duty, till every one is affected like the conſcious prophet, and take up his confeſſion; "I know that for my ſake this great "evil is come upon you."---Let us not then, eſpecially, apply theſe reflections to others whom they may ſuit, wipe our own mouths as innocent, and acquit ourſelves of any guilt. In many things, it is too true, God knows, that we have all offended; our own reformation is neareſt to us; and conſidering the nature of the ſolemnity, which we are now engaged in, that it is a work of great abaſement of ourſelves, let us firſt begin at home; and having taken away the plague of our own hearts, let the ſame care be ſhewn to all within our influence.

And here give me leave to be a little more particular; let me ſay with the freedom which becomes the ſolemnity of this occaſion;——the place and character I ſpeak in require it of me;---that this is a duty more immediately incumbent upon you, who are the chief magiſtrates of this city; and a woe is denounced againſt you, if ye "bear the ſword in "vain----You are "the miniſters of God," as (St. Paul ſays;) you have the ſupreme authority to be "a terror to evil works, and ought continually to "attend upon this very thing." This is a character of great dignity, with which you are inveſted by your fellow-citizens, but which reflects honour upon you in proportion as it is exerted for their good. It lies therefore upon you, as the guardians of the morals, as well as of the rights and liberties of the city, not only to ſhow examples of piety, of obedience to the laws, and of every public virtue, but likewiſe to do all that ſervice to God, and this your city,

city, which your power as magiſtrates enables you to do, and your reputation as good citizens requires. A neglect of the public plainly gives it up; and if the greateſt part of the people are ſeen to be very guilty, you will never be thought to be wholly innocent.

The obſervation of the ſabbath, to promote a ſerious awe of God in the hearts of the common people, is of too great importance to be ſlighted; and after being examples yourſelves, of that humility which is due to the good maker of all things, in his public worſhip, there is nothing which more deſerves to be the object of your zeal.----Example, we know, has a great and extenſive influence, and in many things example is the only means of doing good;---in theſe things "let your light ſhine be-"fore us;"---but where puniſhments may be added, example only will not do. The laws are ready, and the iniquities of the guilty, and the fears and injuries of the innocent, make a demand of your execution. Let theſe then employ your care; remembering always, notwithſtanding the loudeſt pretenſions of zeal and patriotiſm, that he is the beſt magiſtrate, and the greateſt citizen, who does the moſt good in his public and private ſtation ---- The taſk indeed is difficult, in whatever ſhape it is undertaken, to oppoſe with any ſucceſs the vices which are become almoſt the genius of the nation, and the very faſhion of the times we live in.---But yet ---difficult as it may be---to thoſe who make any conſcience of doing the duties of their office, as the miniſters of God and the magiſtrates of the people, this may be a diſcouragement, but it will not be an excuſe.

And therefore----to conclude----let it not be ſaid in generations yet to come----if indeed there ſhall be a generation of Proteſtants and of Engliſhmen after this----that you ſat in council as the governors

of

of this city, when an obſervation of the ſabbath was profaned and ſlighted; when Popery and diſaffection to the government were cultivated; when gaming and levity were the bane of trade and induſtry; when intemperance and uncleanneſs polluted the public ſtreets; when common ſwearing and curſing, perjury and falſe evidence, were the reproach of our very name; and that you calmly looked on, and permitted theſe iniquities to corrupt and diſpirit, to weaken and impoveriſh us, as well as to rob us of all title to God's bleſſing, without making any attempt to hinder or ſuppreſs them.

But let it become your ſtudy, let your hearts be now awakened above all things, to conſult the honour of our maker, and the advancement of true religion: and if God ſhall be pleaſed by your means, to bring this great but ſinful people to repentance, and to ſave them from that gulph of miſery, upon the brink of which, alas! both you, and we, at preſent ſtand, how will all generations call you bleſſed!---your names will be more honoured than words can honour them, and your memory laſt longer than the monuments of braſs and marble.--- Beyond the recompence of men, beyond the breath of fame and uncertain popularity, the Lord himſelf will be your reward; your ſeed ſhall poſſeſs this city, in the enjoyment of the bleſſings of peace and plenty; and ſhall "leave it for an inheritance to "their children after them for ever."

Diſcourſe

Diſc. CXXXV. Mr. *King.*

Preached on the 5th of November.

Luke ix. 54, 55, 56.

When his diſciples James and John ſaw this, they ſaid, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and conſume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and ſaid, ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of; for the ſon of man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them.

OUR bleſſed Saviour, after he had preached from place to place about Canaan and Galilee, attended with his diſciples, and the people of that country had ſufficiently heard the comfortable perſuaſions of his doctrine, and had abundantly ſeen his divine miſſion confirmed by the bounty of his miracles, was, as the evangeliſt tells us, determined to go to Jeruſalem to the feaſt of tabernacles. "He ſtedfaſtly ſet his face that way;" and as he was to go through Samaria, "he ſent meſſengers "before him to make ready for his reception; but "they did not receive him, becauſe his face was as "though he would go to Jeruſalem." They concluded, that as a Jew, he would not worſhip with them on their mount Gerizim, as in the only true temple of the Lord; and imagined too, that as a Jew, he would have no intercourſe with them. You find in St. John's Goſpel, the woman of Samaria ſeem-

ed ſurprized, " that our Saviour being a Jew, " ſhould aſk water of her; for the Jews had no " dealings with the Samaritans."

The diſciples, who had before acted wrong in ſeveral inſtances, that are related by St. Luke in this chapter, were more outragiouſly led away in their conſuming zeal, which is mentioned in the text: they haſtily broke out into all the fury of revenge; and upon the firſt impulſe of the affront, grew ſo ſuddenly warm, that they themſelves were guilty of one to our Saviour, as great as that, which the Samaritans had before offered to him; they conſidered not the immenſity of his power, who could have ſent legions of angels to have deſtroyed the offenders, but paſſionately propoſed from their own heated and angry wiſdom, that " they might " command fire from heaven and conſume them, " even as Elias did:" the reference to whoſe conduct ſhews another miſtake, which the ſudden violence of their temper had led them into; for they ſeemed to think their caſe and that of Elias to be the ſame.—But of this I ſhall ſpeak farther in its proper place.

Is it then conſiſtent with chriſtianity to call down fire from heaven upon thoſe, who differ from us in points of religion, and may therefore treat us with diſreſpect and contempt? Is it ſo, if from a miſtaken zeal they deny us thoſe common benefits, which mankind in general are intitled to?——But why do I aſk the queſtion?——There are very few, who are not convinced, that chriſtianity would forgive, not revenge theſe refuſals; that chriſtianity is a doctrine of mildneſs and moderation, not of hatred and malice.—Yet as there may perhaps be ſome, who have conſidered this as little as the diſciples did; the anſwer to ſuch a queſtion is well worth our taking notice of, as it was given by the great inſtructor and redeemer of mankind. Now you

may

may obſerve, that ſudden as that falſe ſpirit of the diſciples was, in ſhewing their vigour for the cauſe they had engaged in; no leſs ſudden and ready was that calmneſs and tender concern, which our Saviour expreſſed for all mankind; "for he turned "and rebuked them, and ſaid, ye know not what "manner of ſpirit ye are of; the ſon of man is "not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave "them."

A noble leſſon! teaching us to bear the diſappointments and affronts, which we at any time meet with, in ſedateneſs and in patience. For in point of character, this diſappointment or affront was to the higheſt character——it was to the ſon of God. In point of buſineſs or benefit to mankind, his was the buſineſs of a right religion, it was the benefit of an eternal ſalvation.

The indignity, which the Samaritans offered to our Lord, was merely on account of religion: that hoſpitality, with which they received other travellers, though differing from them in opinion, was now ſhut up, and the common rights of mankind extinguiſhed to thoſe, who had ſuch full ſtrength of truth and wiſdom, as not to prefer their temple and their worſhip, to that of any other part of the world. Their cauſe began now to grow deſperate indeed, when their ambition of having the true temple of the Lord, was to be oppoſed by our Saviour's "ſetting his face ſtedfaſtly to go to Jeru-"ſalem," by his going up to the temple there. This was a preference of the temple of Jeruſalem to that of Gerizim: this was reſolving a diſpute, which had long kept up their enmity to the Jews; it was ſettling a debate by the greateſt authority, "by "the Lord of all things, by the judge of all men." —How then was this authority to be weakened? Why, by denying him that admittance, which they denied to no others, no not even to him, when he

went from Judea through Samaria to Galilee; that by the indignity they then put upon him, they might declare to all people, he was no fit judge, he was no true prophet.

Hence learn the mischief of proud and obstinate zeal.—They stopped their ears to the voice of conviction, they refused to see him, the goodness, as well as authority, of whose presence, might have composed the unquietness they had promoted; he might have spoke peace to their souls; but they were warm with revenge, whilst "their hearts ima-"gined a vain thing."

When our Saviour before travelled from Judea to Galilee through Samaria, when his back was towards Jerusalem; when he was not going to worship in that temple, they received him "then; "then the Samaritans believed on him from the "saying of the woman, who testified, that he had "told her all that ever she had done. They then be-"sought him, that he would tarry with them. He "did so, and many more believed because of his "own word; and they said unto the woman, now "we believe, not because of thy saying, for we "have heard him ourselves, and we know that "this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the "world."

Did they then know this, and yet refuse to admit him, when he went from Galilee to Jerusalem to "be received up? They certainly did know this, and they as certainly did refuse him admittance; for they knew also that he would be far from supporting them in the preference of their temple and their worship.

Thus from the jealousy of losing their precedence, from the vanity of worldly ambition, they rejected Christ, they denied him to be what they knew he was; and they were particularly ungrateful to him, who, for the many favours he had conferred

ferred upon them, was by the Jews, their great adverſaries, in deriſion called the Samaritan.

But this fooliſhneſs of wiſdom was not univerſal among the Samaritans, they did not all exclude him; for he was received in another village, as is implied in the words immediately following the text.

Of the ten lepers, that were healed, "there was "but one, who returned to give glory to God, "and he was a Samaritan." In his explanation of the queſtion, "who is my neighbour?" Our Saviour gives an inſtance in a Samaritan. As all of them were objects of his forgiveneſs, many of them were partakers of his mercy.

They then, who were the principal offenders, were only anſwerable for the offence, and they might indeed be accounted doubly anſwerable; firſt, for their own pride and obſtinacy; and, as one perſevering crime always calls in the aid of other crimes, they were again anſwerable for endeavouring to make them ſtagger in their belief, by this notorious inſtance of contempt.——What puniſhment might be thought proper for them, you may obſerve from what followeth: the diſciples thought the crime ſo heinous, that they were for "com-"manding fire from heaven to conſume them.

But as all the Samaritans were not engaged in the affront, ſo neither were all the diſciples for revenging it in this dreadful manner. It is likely, that James and John were ſent to the village, to prepare for the reception of our Saviour and his followers; and as they received the repulſe, they only are ſaid to inſtigate this terrible, this general deſtruction; and they, we may conclude from St. Mark's goſpel, were men of more fiery zeal than any other of the diſciples, for there our Lord diſtinguiſhes them by the remarkable appellation of the ſons of thunder: he well knew the warmth of

their temper; and when for a ſanction of this deſtruction, they haſtily applied the conduct of Elias; he returned the quickneſs and the bitterneſs of their reſentment, as I obſerved before, with as ready, but a more ſeaſonable moderation; he told them, that "they had not conſidered what manner of "ſpirit they were of."

And now it may be time to reflect, as I propoſed, what was the difference between their caſe and that of Elias.—To be ſhort, I ſhall refer you for this particular part of Elias's hiſtory to the books of Kings; and ſhall only recapitulate from it, that Elias had all the accumulated rage of Jezebel and Ahaziah to contend with. They were not convinced by the miracle of the burnt-offering, tho' the people, when they ſaw it, "fell on their faces, and "acknowledged the God of Elias to be the true "God, and immediately obeyed his order, and "ſlew the prieſts of Baal." Ahaziah ſent a captain and fifty ſoldiers to apprehend Elias, not believing what he had told his meſſengers, "that he ſhould "ſurely die." Elias, to vindicate the truth of his predictions, and for his own miraculous protection, called fire from heaven, and conſumed this captain and his fifty ſoldiers.—The ſecond captain with his ſoldiers was ſent with greater fury and impatience; and his meſſage was to tell Elias to come down quickly; but this inſolence to the prophet gave no alarm to him, who "had been directed "by the angel of the Lord;" he was ſecure under the divine command, and this captain alſo, and his ſoldiers, who acted under an oppoſite command from the wicked Ahaziah, were conſumed by the fire, that was called from heaven. But at this village neither Chriſt nor his diſciples had any violence offered to them; upon refuſal here, they had accommodations at another village.

Elias

Elias had ſtopped the king's meſſengers by the particular order of an angel: to maintain this action againſt an haſty and irreligious prince, there muſt have been great power given him from above, and through the whole he acted by the direction of heaven. But there did not ariſe any human apprehenſions of danger from the diſciples being refuſed a lodging in this village; nor was there any influence of heaven, that could direct them to this haſty judgment.——The ſequel tells us juſt the contrary.

Much difference was there likewiſe between theſe two caſes, in another view of them.

Elias called for the deſtruction only of thoſe, who came to ſeize him, and deliver him into the hands of his enemies, of ſuch profeſſed enemies, that notice had imperiouſly been given him, "his "life ſhould be taken away."

The diſciples called for a devouring flame upon the whole village promiſcuouſly; the good and bad were to be involved in the ſame fate; friends as well as foes were to be the burnt-ſacrifice of their religious fury. They did not conſider, that God would not ſuffer the guilty and the innocent to periſh together, no, not in Sodom; that he would not ſuffer Nineveh to be deſtroyed, becauſe there were many in it, "who knew not their right-hand "from their left."

They were quick in remembring the fire, but very dull in forgetting the application of it.

Again, length of days, and riches, and honour, (mere temporal bleſſings) were expected by the unconverted Jews to be the encouragement, and the reward of keeping the ſtatutes, and obſerving the ordinances of God; the puniſhments therefore, that were inflicted on them, were beſt adapted to men of theſe perſuaſions. Preſent calamities were their only conviction; and we all know from the hiſtory of

them that it was their calamities, that made them call upon the Lord; and when they called upon "the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them "out of their diſtreſs," they were inſincere in their thankſgivings, they ſoon "ſtarted aſide like a "broken bow;" they returned to their former iniquities, and added thoſe of the very nations they were delivered from to their own.

Theſe people were to be awakened to their duty by the terrors of heaven: the delivery of the law to them at mount Sinai was introduced by "thun-"derings, and lightning; by the mount's being "greatly ſhaken, and altogether on a ſmoke, by "the voice of a trumpet that was exceeding loud." They were to be made "tremble, before God "ſpake his commandment to them." The ſpirit of Elias then was very proper to enforce thoſe alarming appearances, with which alone they were ſincerely affected.

But afterwards in his appointed time did God by milder, though not leſs powerful motives, and by the ſtill voice of his ſon, call ſinners to repentance, and made a farther revelation of his will to them by him, "who came not to deſtroy men's lives, but "to ſave them.

The diſciples well knew, by the doctrine they had received from Chriſt, that temporary bleſſings or calamities did not diſtinguiſh the good from the bad: they had heard our Lord's ſermon upon the mount, in which he ſtrongly oppoſes the ſaying, "thou ſhalt hate thine enemy;" for his ſaying was, "love your enemies; bleſs them, that curſe "you; do good to them, that hate you; and pray "for them, that deſpitefully uſe you." And he had taught them "to forgive men their treſpaſſes," from a moſt enforcing conſideration, that, if they did ſo, "their heavenly father would alſo forgive "them;

" them ; but if they did not, " neither would he " forgive their treſpaſſes."

When in the preſence of the diſciples, " Jeſus " ſaid to one ſick of the palſy, ſon, be of good " chear, thy ſins be forgiven thee ; certain of the " ſcribes ſaid within themſelves, this man blaſphe- " meth." He then gave them another immediate inſtance of his power, in ſhewing them that he knew their thoughts. He did not exerciſe that power in puniſhing their evil hearts ; but by a moſt convincing way of reaſoning, " aſked them, " whether is it eaſier to ſay thy ſins be forgiven " thee, or to ſay ariſe and walk ?" By which they muſt preſently perceive, that he, who had power with a word to cure the diſeaſes of mankind, had power to forgive their ſins. Thus did they affront the Lord of life and glory ; and thus did he forgive them, and, in return, inſtruct them in the way of ſalvation.

When the " Jews thruſt him out of the city, " and led him to the brow of the hill, that they " might caſt him down headlong, he paſſed through " the midſt of them, and went his way." When his life ſeemed in danger, when they uſed him with much greater indignity, than the village of Samaria did afterwards, he thought not of revenge, but continued to heal the diſtempers of their bodies, and to promote and confirm the reformation of their minds.

Theſe inſtances, and many more might be added, of the lenity, the charity, the merciful diſpoſition of Chriſt himſelf, were manifeſted in the preſence of his diſciples. How then could they expect, that he would ſuffer fire to be called from heaven, to the total deſtruction of theſe Samaritans, when they had plainly ſeen him pardon ſo many perſonal and more groſs offenders. Their zeal had certainly out-run their knowledge ; all became fury and wild-

wildneſs; and "they knew not then what man-"ner of ſpirit they were of."—It was not the ſpirit of Chriſt: It was not the ſpirit of Elias: it was ſo raſh a ſpirit, as would have tended to the deſtruction of themſelves, and all the world.---For, if fire is to come down from heaven, as often as any indignity is offered to God:---Jews, Samaritans, diſciples, all the world would be comprehended in the general ſentence. "We know, (as the "prophet Jeremiah ſpeaks) that the way of man "is not in himſelf; It is not in man, that walketh, "to direct his ſteps. O Lord! correct us but "with judgment, not in thine anger, leſt thou "bring us unto nothing."

The diſciples of Chriſt ſhould "know what man-"ner of ſpirit they are of;" they ſhould always carefully guard againſt the eruptions of enmity and revenge; they ſhould learn, (for Chriſt ſpared no pains of precept or example to teach them) that the motions of their ſpirit ſhould be actuated by a ſaving grace, not by a conſuming zeal.

The general doctrine deducible from what has been ſaid, is plainly this, that we are not to endeavour at the propagation of religion by force and violence, not raſhly to call down God's vengeance upon thoſe, who differ from us in the manner of promoting it.

A zeal for religion is commendable, as it is neceſſary for the ſupport of it; but we ſhould be cautious, that it be conducted by juſtice and mercy, and good-will towards men; that we may be ſure religion is the cauſe we engage in; and that it is not made a pretence, and a covering of ſomething too baſe and too worldly to appear in it's own deformity. A zeal, that is compoſed of unkindneſs to our fellow-creatures, in that very inſtance, forfeits the title of chriſtian; nay, is abſolutely inconſiſtent with humanity.----Yet there may be a great

great fervency in religion, much to the glory of God, to the praiſe of him that exerciſes it, and to the general benefit of mankind: all the contention of being ſuperior to each other in acts of forgiveneſs, charity, and love are laudable efforts of a truly religious ſpirit; they make ambition a virtue, and conſecrate the pride of excelling; they make, in the language of our Saviour, "thoſe who "are the leaſt," who are the moſt ready in their humility to ſerve others, to be the greateſt.

The honour of God our creator, the merits of Chriſt our redeemer, when they once engage our hearts with due attention, are ſubjects, that muſt enliven and warm the coldeſt diſpoſitions: they muſt elevate them into praiſe, and thanks, and adoration; they muſt invigorate our duty and our worſhip, which we are ſtrenuouſly to defend againſt the blaſphemer; and againſt "the fool, who hath "ſaid in his heart, there is no God."

But then from this tendency of our exalted gratitude to heaven; we muſt remember, that as our defence is in behalf of religion, made up of charity and love, ſo ſhould we contend for the truth in the ſpirit of meekneſs. We have a right to convince, but not to condemn thoſe, that differ from us. We are to endeavour the promotion of God's glory, but we are not violently to declare his vengeance, and produce ourſelves as the delegated executioner of it.

It is our duty to vindicate God's honour, it is our duty boldly to rebuke vice, and to be conſtant in the defence of the ſaving health of the ſcriptures; but whilſt we reprehend the errors of men, let us not be offended at their perſons, remembering that we are but men, and how much we all ſtand in need of his interceſſion, who ſitteth on the right-hand of God, and who, when on earth, preached and practiſed forgiveneſs.

The

The application of the whole is natural to the preſent ſolemnity.

This day are we aſſembled to render our ſolemn thankſgiving unto God, that we, as theſe Samaritans, were ſaved from that deſtroying ſpirit and from the ſecret fire, which was laid ready to conſume the king and parliament, to the ſubverſion of the government and religion eſtabliſhed among us; that our perſecutors were rebuked, not by our fore-ſight, but by the providence of God; and that the inſtruments of their malice, who were irritated to break through the peace of this nation, were taken from among the children of men, not by any new act of authority, but by the law that is and has been conſtantly eſtabliſhed among all nations.

Of what this ſpirit was compoſed, and where it was encouraged, the violent proceedings of the Papiſts have never given us time to forget. And are ſure of this, that it could not proceed from that religion, (from the religion of Chriſt) under which they would excuſe their virulence and their cruelty: For our Saviour gave us his living and his dying teſtimony, that the religion he came from heaven to reveal, was not to be promoted by any death but his own, and that of his followers. There was a time indeed, when his apoſtles and diſciples were ſlow of belief that this ſhould happen to him—that the Saviour of the world ſhould not ſave himſelf. But by continually obſerving his ſubmiſſion to the higher powers, and by ſeeing him reſign himſelf to the croſs, purſuant to the decree of an authoritative, though a wicked judicature; they were fully convinced, that the miſſion they were to fulfil, was to be by perſuaſion and example; not by overturning of governments and maſſacring the people.

St.

St. Paul, who "once breathed out threatnings "and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of the Lord; "who was preſent and conſenting to the ſhedding "of the blood of the firſt martyr, St. Stephen; "and who had compelled the ſaints to blaſpheme, "being exceedingly mad againſt them;" when he was converted to the chriſtian faith, was a warm aſſertor of it's doctrine, and his ſpirit "was often "ſtirred in him;" but then it was a ſpirit of argument and reaſoning only, and ſuch as converted others to the right worſhip.——You find, when he became a chriſtian, he "no more breathed out "ſlaughter:" the torrent of his temper became a rapid river, but it kept within due bounds: it did not drown the country, but enriched that paſture, which fed the flock of Chriſt. As he underſtood the conſtitution of thoſe places where he preached, he was ſo far from oppoſing their eſtabliſhed government, that he ever appealed to their own laws, when they themſelves had patience to act conſiſtent with them.

If then the principles of the chriſtian religion forbad the diſciples and apoſtles to propagate the goſpel by fire, by aſſaſſination, or rebellion; whence can the ſucceſſors of St. Paul or St. Peter derive any divine commiſſion to foment the ſpirit of diſcord, to lift up the ſword of perſecution amongſt thoſe nations, where the method, that theſe ſaints themſelves uſed, is encouraged in a free uſe and explanation of the ſcripture, where religion is founded on a deliberate examination of the word of God; and where the virtue of that religion is not obſcured by the compulſion of it.

Were the Papiſts angry with us, that, whilſt they were puffed up with the dignity of ſucceeding St. Peter, we were practiſing his doctrine? Were they forced to have recourſe to his faults, to puniſh us for following his perfections? And was it not a reproach

reproach to their great predeceſſor, to aggravate the violence of his temper, in revenge to thoſe, who were intent on the goodneſs of it?

But as our Saviour condemned "St. Peter for "cutting off the ear of the high-prieſt's ſervant, "and with a touch" immediately healed the wound of his miſtaken zeal; ſo did he rebuke the furious and conſuming zeal of thoſe, who claim ſucceſſion to that apoſtle, by delivering us from the ſtroke, that was (as on this day) by them ſo fatally intended.

And to the ſame Almighty goodneſs are we indebted for the reſtoration of our religion and liberty, by the arrival of his majeſty king William; who, when the legal fences of government were broken down, reſcued us from the blind zeal and bigotry of Popery and arbitrary power.——

Thanks be to thee, O God, that thou haſt rebuked this conſuming fire---thanks be to thee, O God, that thou haſt reſtored us from tyranny to liberty, and given us leiſure to praiſe, honour, and glorify thee: and as we have been ſo often delivered, out of thy great loving-kindneſs towards us, make us evermore ready to ſerve thee in all godly quietneſs!

The bleſſings of this day have been the more happy, as they have been laſting to the nation; for hence do we derive thoſe pure ſtreams of liberty, which have been hitheto ſweetened by the channels through which they have been continued to us. Thoſe wholeſome ingredients of juſtice and clemency, which are inſeparable from his preſent majeſty's diſpoſition, have eſtabliſhed the health of our conſtitution, in church and ſtate: and art and eloquence muſt ſink in the commendation of his virtues, whilſt they are made more illuſtrious by the love and eſteem of his ſubjects.

As

As every wiſe man is ſenſible of the happy union between the king and his people, every wiſe man will be thankful for it. Seditious ſpirits (for all men will not be ſatisfied) may raiſe up miſrepreſentation and calumny, to divide this union; they may falſly call licentiouſneſs, by the endearing name of liberty: but when they fancy, that every oppoſition is patriotiſm, it might ſerve to calm this boaſted ſpirit, if they conſidered, that there is a meanneſs in oppoſing thoſe in authority, out of pride and revenge, as well as in bearing tyranny and oppreſſion. They are both pernicious to the public good. The laſt, it is true, enſlaves us; but does not the other do ſo too? For that divides, and weakens us, and ſets us againſt ourſelves; it produces civil hatreds and contentions; and when, from too great a jealouſy of being ſlaves, we have really made ourſelves ſo, we willingly reſign the ſmall remains of liberty and property, we might with due ſubordination have enjoyed, into the firſt hands, that we think will protect us, and raiſe us again——even but to the level of that condition, which we had ruined by diſſention.

Sorry am I, that I can collect this from the black annals of our Engliſh hiſtory; but this obſervation is not confined to our own nation only: rebellion hath been the common ſcourge of unreaſonable diſcontent.

The expedients againſt ſuch evils are a modeſt opinion of ourſelves, a chearful ſubmiſſion to lawful authority, and a benevolence ſo univerſal, as to include all, who differ from us in political or religious points. If we complain of grievances, we ſhould be certain, that they are really ſo; and conſult upon ſuch occaſions with the ſober and diſcreet part of mankind; not with ſuch as carry a perpetual diſcontent about them; not with ſuch, who are as often angry with providence, as with the govern-

ment

ment of the ſtate. When, upon mature deliberation, we find, that ſomething has been done amiſs, that our ſuperiors have not only been fallible, but falſe in their conduct; our addreſſes to the higher powers for relief ſhould be tendered with duty to the king, and the laws, by which his ſceptre is maintained. For as the laws of the land are always free and open, as no part of our government pretends to infallibility, the diſcovery of any real miſconduct or guilt of thoſe in power, will be an act of true patriotiſm, and the remedy will redound to the honour of the king, and the intereſt of his people, which as they are never to be ſeparated, ſo jointly will they make us a renowned nation, and a praiſe in the earth.

Never had we greater opportunity of diſplaying this national character; we never were more unanimous in our ſentiments of government, than we are at preſent; our city is a "city at unity with-"in itſelf." Judicious and thinking men are greatly of one mind, and it is to the praiſe of thoſe, to whom honour and tribute are due, that from the mixture of ſo many complexions and capacities, they can create ſo much uniformity. It is a pleaſing reflection to think, that a ſpirit of benevolence is diffuſed through all hearts; that we can differ without reſentment; that we can contradict without reproaching; and that our particular contentions are but the kind exertions of our abilities for the general welfare.

That there may be ſome, who are guided by pride and intereſt, and whoſe peculiar politicks are founded merely in their own ſatisfaction, and not on the duty of obedience;——that there may be others of ſo turbulent ſpirits, as to think it mean to be contented with any thing;——that there may too be ſome, who would be ſtartled at calling down fire from heaven, and yet carry ſuch latent

ſparks

ſparks of oppoſition in their breaſts, as are ready to kindle into deſtroying flames from the poiſonous blaſts of envy and faction:—that there may be ſome few ſuch among us ſhould remind us to abate our pride, and teach us not to confide too much in our own ſecurity, but to rely in him, who not from our merits, but from his own great mercies, hath marvellouſly protected and delivered us.

Let us not therefore view ſuch providential deliverances, as we this day celebrate, nor the many bleſſings we at preſent enjoy with indifference and inattention: but let a thorough ſenſe of them ſink, deeply in our hearts, that it may take root there and bring forth in us "the fruit of good living."

Let us conſider, that national bleſſings are, ſooner or latter, bleſſings to each individual; and that it is the duty of every one to expreſs his thankfulneſs for them in ſuch a manner as will be moſt acceptable to him, who hath vouchſafed them to us.

To this end, let that piety, loyalty, and order reign among us, which may teſtify to the world the regard we have for the religion we profeſs, now ſettled among us, after having been reſcued from the darkneſs and cruelty of Popiſh ſuperſtition.

And as the means of preſerving this religion, let us add the reſpect we owe to the government under which it flouriſhes—let us be forward in love to our brethren, and in promoting concord in the ſociety, whereof we are members.

Let us end our thoughts on this day as we began them, by reflecting that a ſpirit of ſeverity towards the errors of others is repugnant to the calm temper of chriſtianity, which is "pure and peace-

" able, gentle and eafy to be intreated, full of
" mercy and good works.—And let us pray for
" the peace of our Jerufalem, and that they may
" profper, who love thee."

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A Faſt SERMON, preached at *Kenſington.*

Rom. i. 32.

WHO, knowing the judgment of God (that they who commit ſuch things are worthy of death) not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in thoſe that do them.

Diſcourſe CXXXII. Bp. *Sherlock.*

Preached on the 30th of *January*, before the Houſe of Lords.

Mark iii. 24.

If a kingdom be divided againſt itſelf, that kingdom cannot ſtand.

Diſcourſe

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Diſcourſe CXXXIII. Bp. *Secker.*

Preached on the 29th of *May*, before the Houſe of Lords.

Pſalm cvi. 12, 13.

Then believed thy words, they ſang his praiſe: they ſoon forgat his works, they waited not for his counſel.

Diſcourſe CXXXIV. Dr. *Warner.*

A faſt ſermon for the fire of *London*, at St. *Paul*'s, before the Lord Mayor.

John iii. 8.

But let man and beaſt be covered with ſackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.--

Diſcourſe CXXXV. Mr. *King.*

Preached on the 5th of *November*, at St. *Paul*'s, before the Lord Mayor.

Luke ix. 54, 55, 56.

When his diſciples James and John ſaw this, they ſaid, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and conſume them, even as Elias did? But he turned and rebuked them, and ſaid, ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of; for the ſon of man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them.

THE END.

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